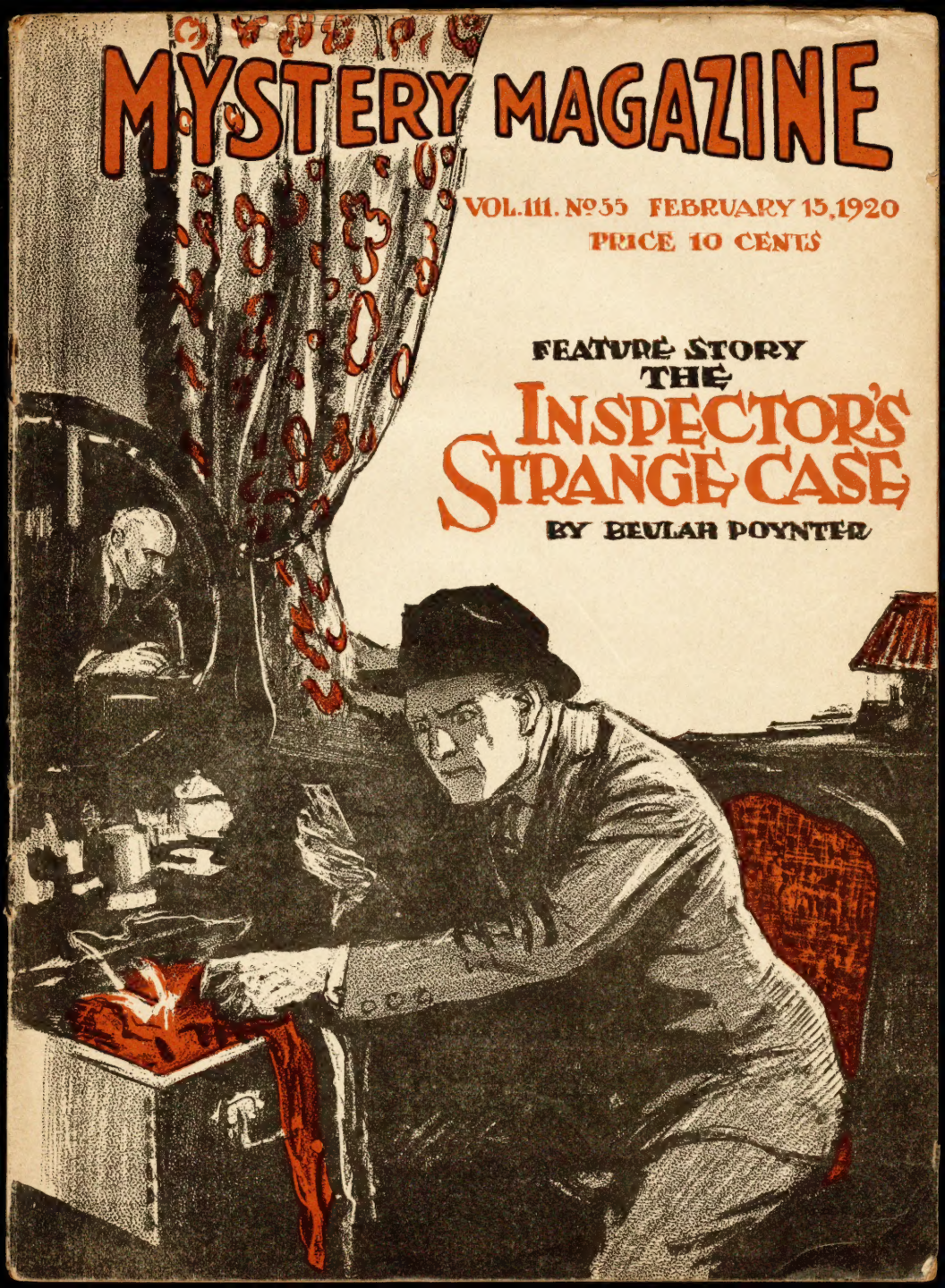
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

VOL. III. No. 55 FEBRUARY 15, 1920
PRICE 10 CENTS

FEATURE STORY
THE
INSPECTOR'S STRANGE CASE
BY BEULAH POYNTER



OUR NEXT FEATURE STORY "THE SECRET OF THE SEALED BOOK"
By ETHEL ROSEMON

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. III FEBRUARY 15, 1920 No. 55

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Published Twice a Month by

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street, New York

N. Hastings Wolff, Pres.
E. Byrne, Treas.
Charles E. Nylander, Sec.

LU. SENARENS, Editor

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

Domestic, Single Copy	10 Cents
Domestic, Yearly	$2.50
Canada	$2.75
Foreign	$3.00

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THE INSPECTOR'S STRANGE CASE

A STORY OF PUZZLING MYSTERY

By BEULAH POYNTER

CHAPTER ONE

THROUGH the blinding rain the great dark house rose like a grim spectre from its shelter of surrounding trees, while the white pebbled path which led from the large pillared veranda to the high iron gate of the fence which enclosed the grounds shone through the darkness like a long, tortuous, glistening ribbon. From the two turret window in the upper story gleamed a faint, faltering light —not unlike faded eyes striving to pierce the gloom outside. The driving wind flung branch against branch, and the intermingling of the leaves and twigs caused the trees to give gasping moans, little plaintive wails, as though they begged the storm to spare them and not strip from their bodies their clothing of foliage.

A crash of thunder, deafening, terror-inspiring—then for a moment the grim, solitary house became outlined by the streak of lightning which illuminated the sky. In that moment the figure of a woman was silhouetted against the stone wall of the building, as she crouched terror-stricken in an endeavor to escape the lightning. Only a moment was she visible—but in that moment it could be seen she was small and slimly built, and clad in a dark, close-fitting suit, her head and face completely covered by a long swathing dark veil. When the lightning flashed again she was gone—though a dark, moving figure could be seen struggling down the muddy road outside the grounds, striving to keep its foothold against the wind and driving rain, while little, sucking sobs of terror issued from its lips.

CHAPTER TWO

"PUT out the light, Tom, and come to bed," said Steele's young wife, smiling at him from the depths of the high four-posted bed, where she lay, her rosy face buried in the yellow satin cushions, her clouds of dark brown hair in damp clustering coils about her small head. "You've read quite long enough, young man, long enough to make you dream of spooks and murders, and frighten me half to death with your moans."

Tom Steele laughed good-naturedly, and closed the book on criminology which he was reading.

"'Fess up!" he said, crossing to the bed and lifting the girl's chin with his forefinger, "'fess up, the light hurts your eyes and you want to go to sleep."

"Maybe so," she replied, cuddling close to him, "but I do think you are working too hard, boy. Day and night you are at it. Why, half the time, dear, I don't know I have a husband, you're getting positively thin from lack of food."

"Now, Grace——!"

"Yes, you are! If I didn't make an attempt to take care of you, I'm afraid I'd be a widow before the year is over. It must stop, honey."

"But it's so interesting," he persisted in a pleasantly boyish manner, his keen gray eyes twinkling into hers, "and I'm so wild to show Donovan what I can do!"

"Just as if he didn't know," said his wife with pardonable pride. "He knows you are the cleverest man on his staff, without you trying to prove it to him. Why, Tommy, darling, every time I think of how you cleared up that Del Monte murder, I just get so proud of you, I nearly die!"

"Well, I wouldn't have you die for the world," laughed her husband, "and, anyway, you over-estimate my part on that case, for I only helped Donovan clear up the mystery, which he probably would have done without my assistance."

"Nonsense! But I shan't argue with you. Put out the light, that's a dear, I am sleepy!"

It was possibly an hour later when the gentle rhythmic breathing of his wife told Tom she was sound asleep, although he, himself, had not closed an eye. He lay revolving in his mind the strange strain of events which had brought this charming girl into his life, and had culminated in his becoming Inspector Donovan's most valuable assistant. The loud, metallic jangle of the telephone on the night table at his elbow startled him and caused him to glance uneasily at the peaceful figure beside him, before he lifted the receiver from the hook. Long practice of finding the telephone in the dark guided his hand, though his voice trembled ever so slightly as he said "Hello!"

"Hello, I'd like to speak to Mr. Steele," came the reply over the wire in a voice unfamiliar to Tom.

"Steele speaking," Tom replied.

"Can you come to forty-five-sixty Riverside at once?" continued the other, evidently in a high state of nervous tension.

"Why," exclaimed Tom in surprise, "that's beyond the city limits."

"I know it is, I'll send my car for you."

"I have one of my own," the young detective replied, "but first I must know why you want me, and who you are."

"Andrew Manners," came back over the wire, and Tom barely suppressed an exclamation, as he recognized the name of the millionaire club man. "There's no time to talk over the phone, Mr. Steele, this is a matter of life or death, or I should not have disturbed you at this hour. Will you come?"

"But, Mr. Manners, if it is as you say, don't you think the police are the persons to call in, not me?"

"No, it isn't a matter for the police, absolute secrecy is what is demanded," cried the exasperated millionaire in a tense, harsh whisper. "Absolute secrecy!"

"Perhaps, then, you do not know I am Inspector Donovan's assistant?" said Tom quietly.

"I know all about you!" snapped the other. "My wife was a friend of Angela McCall's, and through her we learned all the details of the Del Monte murder. I know you to be a gentleman—and if you give me your word that you will keep this matter secret, I am sure that you will. Will you come?"

Tom hesitated before replying; reaching over his head he pulled a cord which switched on the night lamp. The sudden light caused his wife to stir uneasily, but she did not waken; only flung one rounded arm over her face, and turned away as though to shut out the light. A hasty glance at a small ornamental silver clock on her dressing-table showed Tom that it was four o'clock, an eerie hour for a long solitary ride up the Hudson.

"It's four o'clock," he said uncertainly over the phone, "and it's raining cats and dogs."

"Good God! man," exclaimed the other, "don't you realize this is a matter of life and death? That every minute I am exchanging talk with you is wasted! Are you coming or not?"

"I'm coming," Steele replied, "give me that number again."

He jotted it down on a pad on the table beside him, then springing out of bed, clothed himself, hoping that Grace would not awaken until his return.

"Some night," he muttered, as he closed the hall door behind him and trudged off to the garage where he kept his car. In the one block he had to walk he became drenched to the skin, for the wind succeeded in turning his umbrella wrong side out, so it was no protection from the torrents of rain which were falling. It is doubtful if the name of the man who had called him had been less known that Tom would have ventured up that long stretch of road, which, at this hour of the morning, might have been in the wilds for all the signs of habitation it showed.

Riverside Drive, after a certain hour at night, when all its residents are in bed and the lights extinguished, presents a gloomy, foreboding aspect in itself, as any belated wayfarer can tell you. There is something almost sinister about the placid smooth surface of the Hudson, dotted here and there with boats, the street lights set far apart seem to offer little illumination when turning into the long, broad drive from Broadway, which is always bright. As the Drive proper is left behind, and one goes into the rugged, picturesque road which leads into Yonkers, and beyond, all semblance of a great city is lost.

As Tom left the city lights behind him, he whistled to keep up his courage, though the chug-chug of his engine, the noisy drip of the rain, and the sucking sound of his wheels in and out of the slushy road, drowned any tune he might make. Tom was not a coward by any manner of means, but the errand toward which he was speeding was so fraught with mystery, the hour such an uncanny one, the night so stormy, that he could not help but feel a shiver of apprehension run up and down his spine.

"Where the devil is this number?" he muttered. On past Yonkers he went, until suddenly looming out above, high to the right of him, gleamed a large, white house, and a high pillared veranda, rows of shade trees, and a white ornamental fence. Only for a second he hesitated. In the rain he could not discern the number, but the location of the house, together with its solitude, bade him, at least, drive to the gateway and make sure if he were mistaken or not.

The road which led up to the property was a treacherous,

narrow pathway, little better than a pebble walk, and Tom drew a breath of relief when he reached the gate in safety. As he flashed his spot-light on the silver plate over the gate, a man came out from under the shelter of the veranda, and ran down the ribbon-like walk towards him, seemingly oblivious of the storm and the rain falling about him.

"Mr. Steele?" he cried in a voice fraught with anguish.

"Yes." Tom shifted his gear, and stumbled out of his car. "Mr. Manners?"

"Thank God you've come!" almost sobbed the other. "I'm half mad waiting for you!" He flung open the great iron gate as he did so. "Drive in," he continued, as if by second thought. "I'll go with you; my man will attend to your car."

CHAPTER THREE

THE room into which Tom was ushered by his host was a spacious, old-fashioned one, furnished with mahogany, and finished in the same wood. A huge chandelier with cut-glass ornaments was suspended from a high ceiling and every light in it was burning. There was something almost startling in the dazzling white illumination, after the blackness of the night outside. Though the night was warm, Mr. Manners had a gas log burning in the fire-place, before which a huge white wolfhound lay. At first Tom fancied the dog asleep, but a second look showed him it was dead. As if reading his thought, Mr. Manners nodded his head.

"Yes, dead," he muttered with a little catch in his voice. He crossed the long stretch of room and, kneeling on the highly polished floor beside the dog, rested his hand for one second on its head. When he arose there was a feverish, unsettled gleam in the dark eyes he turned toward Tom.

"Sit down," he said, hoarsely, waving a white, well-cared-for hand toward a huge armchair before the fire. "Shall I give you something after your ride?"

"Thanks, no," Tom replied, "I don't indulge."

A ghost of a smile flickered about the thin lips of Manners, but he poured a stiff drink of whisky out of a decanter which stood on a long mahogany table, and, drinking it at a swallow, straightened up abruptly, and turned to Tom.

Manners was a tall, lean man in his early forties, with an aristocratic, not unhandsome, face, his white hair, with the least perceptible wave, making distinguished, what might have been an unattractive face. The contrast between his jet black brows, dark eyes and white hair was a bit startling, pronouncedly so, for the moment, when his face was livid, his thin nostrils aquiver with excitement, and his thin, bloodless lips set in a rigid, white line. Every move the man made was indicative of the mental torture he was suffering, though Tom sensed the control he was using upon himself. There was something pathetic in the smile he gave the young detective as he drew an armchair close to the one in which Tom was seated, and extending a cigar towards him, said quietly:

"You smoke, I presume?"

"I do," replied Tom, his face crinkling into a good-natured, Irish smile, the smile that had been behind a great deal of his success. As he lighted the cigar, he noted the room he was in, and decided it was Mr. Manners' study, from the rows of books about the walls, the desk in one corner and the legal documents on the table, though he could not associate the garish lighting with a study, and the man before him did not look like a scholar, though the cast of his features, his long, well-shaped head, high arched quivering nostrils proclaimed him to be artistic—in fact, Tom remembered him as being known as a dilettante of all the arts.

From his hasty scrutiny of the room Tom's eyes wandered to the supine figure of the dead dog at his feet—and then he gave a little apologetic cough indicating his desire for his host to explain.

"Yes," Mr. Manners said, sensing the meaning of the cough. "I shan't keep you longer than is necessary, Mr. Steele"—he hesitated, a dark flush slowly spread over his face—"Mr. Steele, my wife has disappeared."

"No!"

"A week ago I received word which necessitated my presence in California, where I expected to be detained for three months, at least. I hesitated about leaving Mrs. Manners, yet her condition was such that she could not accompany me; in fact, to be frank, Mr. Steele, my wife is to become a mother. Naturally, as I said, I hesitated about leaving her behind, and it was with a great deal of misgivings that I did so. My servants are all trustworthy and Mrs. Manners' own personal maid like a sister to her—so I strove to banish worry and made my departure. Upon my arrival in California, I discovered I could entrust my business to a colleague, so I immediately returned home. Imagine my distress to discover my home closed, with no sign of habitation, and my wife gone."

"Do you mean the servants and every one were gone?" exclaimed Tom in surprise.

"That, exactly," replied the millionaire. "The front door was unlocked, but aside from that the house showed no sign of having been occupied for some days."

"When did you return?" Tom inquired.

"This afternoon. At first I was only mildly surprised at finding my wife absent. I fancied she might be visiting any one of a number of friends, and had taken her maid with her, or was calling upon her physician, but it was a bit baffling to find the place without servants. Toward evening, becoming a little alarmed, I telephoned Mrs. Olmstead, my wife's most intimate friend (she has no relatives in the city, you understand; in fact, is an orphan) to see if by chance she were there. I couched the subject in the most diplomatic manner I could, so that Mrs. Olmstead would not sense my worry, but she had not seen Julia—that is, Mrs. Manners, for some days, possibly before my departure for California. I then telephoned two other ladies whom she might be visiting, although since Mrs. Manners' prospect of motherhood she has become very retiring, most reticent, and it was totally unlike her to go about at all. Still, thinking she had become lonely without me, and might have been tempted to their homes, I telephoned them as I said, but received the same answer I had from Mrs. Olmstead. I became truly nervous then. I knew she had not gone to the theater—a drive in this weather was out of the question, likewise a railroad journey in her condition, and the absence of the servants baffled me beyond measure. I must tell you, Mr. Steele, my wife is a great deal younger than myself; in fact, some twenty years. She is a very beautiful, attractive young woman. This is her picture." He handed a framed photograph of Mrs. Manners to Tom, and waited for his comment on it before continuing.

The laughing, roguish face in the pictured likeness did not belie Mr. Manners' description of his wife. Evidently she was a very beautiful woman. Wide, dark eyes, with lurking devils of mischief, smiled from the silver frame; a cloud of dark, curling hair waved rebelliously about a small pansy-like face; a small delicately shaped mouth exposed a row of white, even teeth—a rebellious, childish face it was, wistfully sweet, with a hint of weakness in the delicate chin and mouth. Tom had seen the same picture many

times before, as before her marriage to the wealthy clubman Julia Austin had been a popular actress—rather, a musical comedy prima donna. Posters of this same picture had peered at him from the windows, street car advertisements, and on the glass panels of the theater wherein she appeared. Her wedding with the millionaire had caused no end of talk, though, to his knowledge, scandal had never placed its smudgy finger on the girl, and there had been no reason, aside from the disparity of their ages and fortunes, to cause comment on their union.

"My wife was well known on the stage," Manners said, with a faint smile, evidently reading his thoughts, "but, despite her public life, she was a quiet, home-loving, domestic little woman. After our marriage she rarely went about. Never to the theater, as she had not cared for her profession, necessity having driven her upon the stage as a child. We were never separated. I don't think there was a more devoted couple anywhere—I adored her."

Tom noticed that he had lapsed into the past tense when speaking of his wife, as though he already feared for the worse.

"How long have you been married?" he inquired quietly.

"Two years."

"Pardon me if I seem personal, Mr. Manners, but I must ask you a question which may have a direct bearing upon your wife's disappearance, as such it seems to me. Was Mrs. Manners averse to becoming a mother?"

"On the contrary, it made her exceedingly happy. We are both intensely fond of children, and welcomed the thought of a child with great joy. Only that was needed to complete our happiness. You didn't think that——?"

"One never knows. She might have——"

"Nonsense!" Manners sprang to his feet impatiently.

"Forgive my interruption," said Tom. "I don't think you finished telling me all that took place on your return."

"After I had telephoned the friends whom I mentioned, I made a survey of the house. All was just as I had left it, with the exception that everything belonging to the servants had been removed as though they had been dismissed—not a trunk remained, not a rag of clothing hung in the wardrobe—shoes, hats, gowns, all had vanished, as they themselves had."

"Your wife's wardrobe?" Tom inquired quietly.

"It had not been disturbed," Manners replied. "To my knowledge, nothing of hers is missing, beyond a house gown which she had been wearing a great deal of late."

"No hat, coat, suitcase missing?"

Manners hesitated.

"That I can't say. Naturally, her wardrobe is extensive. I was too upset to give it more than a cursory survey. We'll examine it later."

"Do you know where any of your servants live?"

"I have the addresses of my wife's maid, the chauffeur, and the cook in this," replied Manners, drawing a thin leather notebook from his vest pocket, "the others I do not know."

"Have you telephoned these addresses to inquire the reason of their leaving?"

"No, I haven't. I hesitated about doing so before I saw you. You see, considering my wife's condition, I was uncertain what she might or might not have done."

"You mean she has become——?" Tom paused.

"A trifle erratic, yes. I believe you might call it that. It is not unnatural, the doctor informed me. She had developed moody spells, would become a little hysterical at times, and once or twice shut me out of her room. I trust you to keep this confidential, Mr. Steele."

"Certainly; go on. How long has she been erratic?"

"Only a short time."

"You never noticed any hysteria before?"

"Oh, no! Temperament, yes, but that went with her talent. She was always a cheerful, happy little body, full of vitality, fairly bursting with life."

Looking at the picture he still held, Tom could well imagine the description fitting the girl, though he could not realize her being happy in the great, gloomy house, away from the city, its bright lights, and the life of excitement which she had led before her marriage. Vaguely, he remembered that Julia Austin had been a familiar figure about the cabarets and restaurants, her name a boast of many a young scion of Fifth Avenue, even though her character was unsmirched. It seemed inconceivable to believe that in marrying this austere man of middle age she had put all this behind her and had settled into a quiet humdrum life, be it of luxury and of potential motherhood.

"Did you telephone the Lying-in Hospital?" he asked, feeling Manners' dark eyes upon him.

"No, we had made no arrangements, as yet. It is a trifle premature, and then our physician is to attend to that!"

"This physician," said Tom, "have you known him long?"

Manners looked surprised at the question.

"Since my marriage," he replied, "and my wife long before that; we regard him as a personal friend."

"Hem!" Tom rose and, knocking the ashes from his cigar, walked about the long room, conscious that his host's eyes were following every movement he made. Suddenly Manners burst forth, his repression leaving him:

"For God's sake, man, say what you think. Do you suspect foul play? Do you think she has been murdered?"

"There, there," Tom said conciliatingly, placing a hand on his shoulder to quiet him. "Don't give way. I suspect nothing of the kind. Have you any reason to?"

"No, oh, no!"

"You're hiding nothing from me?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Then, why that question? Had your wife any enemies?"

"None that I know of, as God is my judge, none that I know of."

For answer, Tom pointed to the dead dog. "Did he die a natural death?" he inquired.

"No! Damn them, some one had poisoned him, poisoned him. He died after my return." Manners buried his face in his hands, not ashamed over his grief about his dead canine friend.

"Do you think one of the servants poisoned him?" Tom asked gently.

"Of course not. Nero was not vicious. They were all fond of him."

"And you are positive he was poisoned?"

"Yes. The poor brute died at my feet, just before I telephoned you. How or why it happened, I don't know, but there he is, and I saw him die!"

"He was with you on your trip?"

"No, I left him with my wife."

"Didn't you think it strange that he should be here and the house empty?"

"He wasn't here when I arrived," Manners replied. "It was only a few minutes before his death that the poor beast showed up. It was as though he had dragged himself home to die. He seemed to be at the point of death from the moment he entered the house, though he tried to wag his tail and bid me welcome! It was pitiful to watch him. Before either Jackson, my man, or myself could do anything he was dead!"

"And you've no suspicion as to who could have poisoned him?"

"None whatsoever, but whoever did it shall suffer, you

can rest assured upon that!" The man's flashing eye and vindictive manner boded ill for the wretch who had perpetrated the deed.

"Well," said Tom abruptly, "suppose we telephone your physician!"

"Why," gasped Manners, "he knows nothing of my wife, I am positive."

"Perhaps not, perhaps yes," said Tom grimly. "At any rate, there must be an examination made of the dog to determine the cause of his death."

"Steele," said the other, "you don't associate his death with my wife's disappearance?"

Tom chose not to answer, but bade him telephone the physician at once. As Manners took down the receiver, Tom noticed that the millionaire's repression seemed to have left him, and that he was on the verge of collapsing entirely. Evidently from Manners' conversation over the telephone the physician knew no more of Mrs. Manners' whereabouts than he himself did, and rather resented being dragged out of bed at an unseemly hour to reply to what, apparently, was a foolish question regarding a dead dog.

"He says he'll come in the morning to examine Nero," Manners said, turning to Tom; "is that soon enough?"

"Yes," Tom replied. After Manners turned away from the telephone, the young detective added quietly: "Suppose you show me your wife's apartment now."

Without replying, the millionaire opened the paneled door which led into the hallway, and motioned him to follow. It was entirely dark, and Tom stumbled against the foot of the wide winding stairs which led upward before his host switched on the light.

Just as he reached the landing above, a scream coming from somewhere outside caused him to pause abruptly and look askance at Manners, who, in turn, became paler, if possible, and clutched at the stair railing for support.

"You heard it?" he cried hoarsely.

"Yes!" Tom nodded his head, and darted down the stairs.

Again the scream penetrated the night air, and Tom distinctly heard the words, "Manners! Manners!" uttered above the sound of the falling rain.

CHAPTER FOUR

"THE garage!" said Manners, tagging at his heels, "it came from the garage!"

Instinctively following the sound, Tom rushed out a side door, making for a small building which stood a little to the left of the house. A light shining through a window guided him. Just as he left the veranda a dark figure darted past him and vanished into the shrubbery and hedge-rows near by.

"Gad!" he muttered. Simultaneously a man appeared in the doorway of the garage, the background of light bringing into bold relief his slender, compact figure.

"Don't let him get away!" the man in the doorway cried. "Don't let him get away!"

As Manners joined him he realized that the person who cried out was Jackson, the man who had attended to his car.

"What is it, Jackson?" Manners cried, dodging into the shelter of the garage, followed by Tom.

The servant looked very pale, and not a little shaken, and he dropped into a chair before speaking.

"I was sitting here in the car, sir, thinking perhaps the gentleman might want it at any moment, and would not like to go out into the rain to fetch it, so I stayed here to fetch it to him. I must have fallen asleep, sir, when all of a sudden a noise startled me, then I knew I wasn't alone. Starting up, I saw a man come down those stairs, sir, running like mad, he was, sir, with a look of the devil in his face. I cries out when I see him, and my cry makes him see me. With that he breaks for the door, and I try to hold him! It isn't any use, sir; he's bigger and stronger than I am, sir, and he fights desperate. I call to you again, sir, for I know he means no good about the house at this hour, but before you can get here, sir, he's gone!"

"That's so!" ejaculated Tom. "A man darted past me as I came out! By Jove, I'm sorry we let him escape!"

"Perhaps it isn't too late."

"At the rate he was going, sir," said Jackson, "he's on his way to Yonkers by now."

"What was he like? Could you tell?" Tom inquired, studying the man before him.

"Not exactly; he wore an ulster, was taller and larger every way than I am. I didn't see his face."

"Not a bad description," said Tom; "and he came from upstairs?"

Jackson nodded assent.

"That's strange," said Manners feverishly. "The upper portion has been boarded up ever since Mrs. Manners thought it unsafe to have the chauffeur sleep in it, and gave him quarters in the house instead!"

"He came down those stairs," Jackson said insistently Tom liked the man's manner. He was little more than a boy, and was a clean-cut, well-set-up youngster and, now that his own ruddy color had returned after his fright, looked more like an athlete than a valet. His flaming red hair was close cropped, and his pugnacious snub nose, wide mouth and freckled face spelled country boy to the detective.

Tom crossed to the foot of the stairs, and flung open a door which had hidden them from view, but he could see nothing, as all was absolute blackness.

"Can you turn on the lights up there from here?" he asked, turning to Manners.

In reply the other switched a button on the wall to his right and, without hesitating, Tom darted up the now brilliantly lighted stairway. Even as he did so an odor assailed his nostrils, which for the instant he did not place, so unexpected it was in the vicinity, and even when he realized what it was he fancied himself laboring under a delusion.

"Hold on there!" cried Jackson. "Got a gun? You can't tell what's up there!"

"I'm armed!" Tom replied. "Coming?"

The others followed him.

That both Manners and his servant were surprised by the aspect of the quarters into which the stairs led them was evinced by the startled exclamations which escaped them, as well as the looks of amazement on their faces.

The place might well have been a lady's boudoir instead of the upper unused story of a garage. Heavy silken curtains hung from the windows, and were screened from the outside view by the shutters which enclosed them; oriental rugs covered the floor, and draped a long, low divan; Teakwood chairs and tables, together with a bronze Buddha and innumerable porcelain idols, gave the place an exotic appearance. Pieces of Chinese embroidery covered the gray, unpapered walls. Bronze lamps suspended from the ceiling cast strange reflections on the floor. At one corner hung a truly wonderful piece of embroidery, acting as a curtain to separate the two portions of the room.

The room was in disorder, a pair of slippers lay beside the divan, an embroidered kimono hung over the back of a chair, while bits of shattered glass were strewn upon one rare table. Manners sniffed.

"What do I smell?" he said, his voice hoarse with amazement.

Before he could reply Tom had stepped toward the hanging curtain, and, giving it a jerk, pulled it aside. As he did so he gave a cry of horror. There, stretched on a divan similar to the one in the other portion of the room, was the body of a woman! A young woman clad in a gorgeous flowered kimono, her red-gold hair hanging about a beautiful but dissipated face, her eyes closed, not in sleep, but in death.

"Good God!" said Manners, but before he could touch her Tom pulled him away.

"Your wife?" the detective asked.

"No! No! I never saw her before! I don't understand it at all. I don't understand it!"

"This is a matter for the police," said Tom grimly. "I can't take the responsibility of a murder on my shoulders!"

CHAPTER FIVE

ANDREW MANNERS was too dazed and bewildered by the turn events had taken to do more than faintly protest against the publicity which would ensue from calling upon the police, but Tom overrode his mild objection, declaring that matters were entirely too serious to mince words. Inquiring if there was a telephone in the garage, and being informed in the affirmative, he proceeded to call up Headquarters, and stated briefly what he had discovered, forebearing to mention the fact of Mrs. Manners's disappearance. The millionaire's dejected, hopeless attitude, his utter misery, as he sat in the garish, oriental room, shaking as with a heavy chill, prompted Tom to spare him by not dragging his wife's name into the affair, so long as it was possible to prevent it.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Manners," he said as he turned away from the telephone, "but I'm afraid we won't be able to keep silent about your wife for long. This may or may not be a murder. I don't know, but unquestionably this woman's death and Mrs. Manners's disappearance have something to do with each other!"

"You aren't accusing my wife of killing this woman!" Manners cried, starting violently to his feet.

"My dear sir," said Tom, "I'm accusing no one, least of all your wife, but you must admit her disappearance at this time is very strange, to say the least, and you should be the last one to stand in our way when it comes to solving the mystery."

"I am, I am," sobbed the stricken man.

While they were waiting for the men from Headquarters to report Tom made a close survey of the garage, but found nothing which offered any clue to the murder, if murder it was. Aside from the disorder in the room before mentioned, there was no evidence of any struggle, nor any indication as to how the young woman had met her death. There was no wound upon her person, nor any finger prints. But the strained, horror-stricken look on her face, the intense agony depicted there, showed only too plainly that she had not met her death naturally. In life she had unquestionably been a woman of beauty and refinement. Even the ravages of dissipation had not robbed her of traces of which she had been. The vivid spots of rouge on her painted face stood out incongruously in death; the gorgeous purple-and-gold kimono accentuated the brassy gold of her tumbled hair. Save for the odor which Tom had noticed on opening the door, there was nothing about to verify his suspicions that some one had been smoking opium in the room. He had expected to find a lamp, at least, tucked away, but a careful search produced nothing but a pair of stout walking shoes, obviously the woman's, a serge gown of good cut and tailoring and a small straw hat. As there were no marks on the garments, they did not serve to identify the woman.

"Mind staying here alone while we go about the grounds?" Tom asked, turning to Jackson.

"Not downstairs," replied the other with a sickly smile, "but I don't think I'd fancy staying up here alone with her."

Tom smiled, and handed him a pistol, which he bade him use if necessary; then the three walked down the stairs, when the young detective opened a pocket in his machine, and drawing forth two more revolvers, handed one to Mr. Manners and pocketed the other.

"That chap may still be lurking about the grounds," he said grimly, "in which case it's just as well to be armed, for he might put up a stiff fight."

Dawn was breaking when he and Manners again returned to the garage, after a thorough search of every nook and cranny of the place, which had revealed them nothing. Jackson had again fallen sound asleep, his vivid head pillowed on his chest, while his lusty snores would have driven away any would-be intruders.

"Nothing's been disturbed," Tom said, smiling, as he nodded toward the sleeping boy. "I don't see any need to awaken him. If you don't mind, we'll go back to the house, and you can show me your wife's apartment, as you intended doing when his screams interrupted us. In the meantime, you'd better call up those numbers you have and get in touch with your servants in case we need them."

Mrs. Manners's blue and ivory boudoir was redolent of femininity, and to Tom, stepping onto the soft valvet rug, it seemed almost a sacrilege to intrude. An ivory colored chaise longue with blue satin cushions still bore the imprint of their mistress's body, a water-colored likeness of her smiled at them from the wall. To the stricken husband, the very air must have breathed "Julia" to him, for he dropped miserably upon the dainty bed, between the windows, and buried his face in shaking hands.

"Brace up, old man, brace up," said Tom, a wave of sympathy sweeping over him. "Come, come!" he continued brusquely, though not unkindly, pointing to a ridiculously ornamented telephone on a tabouret. "Get busy."

Mechanically his host obeyed him, although the act seemed an effort.

One by one he located the missing servants, each apparently surprised at being asked to return, as Mrs. Manners had given them three months' leave.

"What do you make of it?" he asked pitifully, turning to Tom. Tom merely shook his head. The chauffeur alone they could not locate, the landlady of the house where he usually roomed when out of a position having no knowledge of his whereabouts, other than his present situation, and not a little surprised at their inquiring for him.

Manners turned away as though the sight of Tom prying into his wife's belongings, her writing desk, wardrobe and chests of wearing apparel, hurt him. "Is it necessary?" he asked with trembling lips.

"It is," Tom replied. "Otherwise I wouldn't do it, and it is much better that I examine everything which might aid in tracing her than that the police should."

"Yes, much better," the other replied, with a dry lipped smile, as he turned away his face, and seemed to sink into a lethargy. Tom barely suppressed an exclamation which rose to his lips, for embedded in a maze of lingerie he found a card, just an ordinary playing-card, but with

traces of the sickly odorous gum which had led them to search the upper story of the garage so thoroughly.

CHAPTER SIX

PLACING the pungently smelling bit of cardboard in his vest pocket, Tom turned innocently to his host.

"How about some coffee?" he inquired. "It's seven o'clock, and breakfast wouldn't set bad."

Manners rose laboriously, and led the way down to the kitchen. "The cook being gone," he said, "I suppose we'll have to call upon Jackson, though I can't vouch for him as a chef."

"No need," said Tom. "I can make as good coffee as the next one."

They were finishing a particularly hearty breakfast, which the surprised Manners had been coerced into eating, when Police Inspector Donovan, accompanied by a medical examiner and two plain-clothes men, arrived in a mud-caked, disreputable-looking machine, a flat tire having added to the discomfort of their journey and delayed their arrival.

They accepted the coffee Tom offered them with a relish, asked a few pertinent questions, and then, preceded by Tom, went out to the garage, where the dead woman lay."

"Hem!" snapped Donovan, sniffing the air, as he followed his young colleague up the steps. "Hop!"

"Smells like it, doesn't it?" said Tom, "although there's no indication of it up here." He felt a bit guilty withholding his knowledge of the telltale card which he had in his pocket, but he desired to save Mrs. Manners's fair name at all costs, and an idea was germinating in his brain which he was most anxious to foster.

"Opium! Opium here!" The incredulity in the millionaire's voice caused the inspector to laugh. "Why, what would opium be doing here?"

"Evidently some one has been smoking it," replied the inspector grimly. "Looks like a high-class hop joint to me. Sure you knew nothing about the arrangement of this floor before last night?"

"Positive," replied the bewildered millionaire, showing by his manner that not until this moment had he fully comprehended just what the place had indicated. "I give you my word until this gentleman here, Mr. Steele, opened the door, I was under the impression that this was a totally empty room, boarded up and possibly cobwebby from disuse."

Inspector Donovan gave him a sharp scrutiny, but said nothing. He emitted little grunts, which might mean anything or nothing, as he peered about the chamber itself, and looked searchingly into the dead woman's face.

"Know her?" he inquired abruptly of Manners.

"No, I told Mr. Steele I had never seen her before."

"Never mind what you told Steele, tell me!" he snapped impatiently.

"I never saw her before, on my oath."

"I'll take your word for it. How about you, young man?" he continued, turning to Jackson. The servant's reply was the same as his master's.

Tom, watching his chief, saw a peculiar smile flicker about his well-shaped mouth, while the long, gray eyes narrowed. "Well, I have," said the inspector quietly. "This woman was Valerie Webb, a well-known character about town at one time. I think she has played in the same theatrical company with your wife, Mr. Manners."

The man addressed winced as though the officer had struck him. "Valerie Webb!" he whispered, repeating the name. "I—I remember my wife mentioning the name. I never knew her; it was before we met, my wife and I, I mean."

"Where is your wife?" Donovan asked abruptly over his shoulder, as he scrutinized the room.

Tom's heart ached for the club man, although he replied easily enough, "Visiting at her cousin's."

"We'll need her at the investigation, I'm thinking," said the officer. Then he turned to the physician, who had been examining the woman. "Well?"

"The woman has been dead a number of hours," replied the doctor, Allerton by name. "Unquestionably she met death through morphine poisoning, whether self-administered or not I cannot say."

"Thought so," said Donovan. "Wonder if she has any friends or relatives to notify?"

As no one answered, he strolled about the place, pulling at a bit of embroidery, examining a teakwood table, as though he were an art collector, sniffing the air like a high-bred dog and seemingly satisfied at what he discovered.

"By George, this is interesting," he exclaimed, leaning over the table upon which were scattered the bits of broken glassware. "This table cost some money, eh, Mr. Manners?"

"That I cannot say," replied the other wearily. "As I said before, I knew nothing of the furnishings of this room, much less of their cost."

"I beg your pardon," said Donovan dryly. "I had forgotten. It's a wonderful piece of workmanship. Whoever purchased it certainly knew the value of teakwood." Whether by intention or quite by accident, his long forefinger pressed a button on the side of the ivory carving, and a portion of the table swung open, disclosing a little compartment in which rested the entire smoking outfit.

"Neat, I'll say," laughed Donovan, "and incriminating. Oh, boy! Did your wife know of this ingenious arrangement, Mr. Manners?"

"She does not, sir," the other replied stiffly. "She is as unaware as I was that this room is furnished."

"I wonder——" mused the Inspector. "McNulty, you stay with the body. I'm going back to the house and question the servants."

If Manners heard the last remark his face did not indicate it. The room with its oriental furnishing seemed to have a strange fascination for him, and it was as though loth to tear himself away that he followed the others out of the garage and into his home.

Tom was not a little surprised at his chief's behavior, but he followed him silently into the cold, gray dawn.

Although a damp, hazy daylight had crept over the earth, the huge chandelier with its cut-glass dangles was still a blaze of white light when they entered the study. With an obvious effort, Manners requested them to be seated, and then seemed oblivious as to whether they did or not, but crossing to the window stood staring off into space.

Donovan paid no heed to the millionaire, but questioned Jackson closely regarding the man he had seen and all that had taken place within the garage. The red-haired boy's answers were frank and to the point, and there was no question in any one's mind as to the truth of his statements.

Tom then went through a cross-questioning, but he carefully avoided Mrs. Manners's name.

"How did you come to be out here ahead of me, Tom?" inquired the inspector shrewdly. "You say you discovered the body."

For the ghost of a second the young detective hesitated, then he pointed to the body of the dog, which had not yet been removed. "It was because of his death Mr.

Manners sent for me," he replied. "Hardly a matter for the police, but of enough importance to him to merit an investigation."

"Poisoned, eh?" said Dr. Allerton.

Mr. Manners nodded his head.

"It isn't usual to find some one has done that to your pet dog," said Donovan. "I think I'd be pretty sore if some one dragged me out on a night like last to trace the murder of a dog!"

Tom did not answer him, and although he felt the dark eyes of the millionaire on him, he did not look in his direction. Donovan was too clever a man to "put anything over," he knew, and Tom knew Mrs. Manners must be located quickly or the inspector would have to be informed of her disappearance.

"Well, trot out your servants," said Donovan, dismissing the subject of the dog with a wave of his hand, although the physician was kneeling beside it, evidently puzzled by its death.

Mr. Manners coughed at the inspector's words, and turned as though to press a button from force of habit. Jackson, who knew of the turn affairs had taken, spoke up quickly:

"I'll call them, sir." Then left the room quickly before Donovan could stop him. To Tom's surprise he returned a few minutes later accompanied by a large, corpulent woman, dressed in a raincoat and man's felt hat, under which wisps of streaked gray hair straggled about her face. She was spouting with indignation, as her flashing eyes and high color indicated, and paying no attention to damage done floor and rugs, she planted a dripping umbrella in the middle of the room and leaning upon it, faced the group.

"What's the meaning of this, that's what I'd like to know?" she spluttered. "For why am I dragged out of my warm, dry bed in the wee hours to come trudgin' back here in the wind and rain?"

"Who is this woman?" inquired Donovan.

"Mrs. West, my cook," Manners replied.

"That was!" snapped the woman. "Wasn't I dismissed a week ago, bag and baggage, and now I'm sent for to come in a hurry? What kind of goin's on is this, anyway, I'd like to know?"

"Dismissed!" exclaimed the inspector. "Where is your present cook, Mr. Manners?"

"I have none. I went to California on business, to be gone three months, and my wife decided to close up the house during my absence."

"That she did!" said Mrs. West vindictively. "Fired us without notice! A royal scheme, I call it, and for why I can't say, but just as soon as the master's back is turned, she calls us all into the drawing-room, and with a take it or leave it air about her, she says, says she, 'Here is three months' wages for you and you may go out at once—at once,' says she, just as if we were vipers and hurt her to look at, and us that dumfounded we could only look at her and gasp like sick canaries. Then, just as calm-like as you please, she says, 'I'm shuttin' up the house till Mr. Manners returns,' say she. 'Then perhaps I'll re-engage you!' Hem, says I, and again I says it, it ain't my way of doing business, it ain't!"

"At least she paid you generously," said Manners, with quiet dignity.

"Well, I ain't saying she didn't," said Mrs. West. "But it's the way she put us all out that I'm objecting to, and you wouldn't have liked it either. I ain't sayin' Mrs. Manners wasn't as kind a mistress as the next one until that day, when she seemed to change something fierce. We all talked about it, yes, we did, and Margaret—that's her own maid—said she wouldn't come back to work for her for no money, no, sir, for no money."

"What was her reason for saying that?" asked Donovan.

"'Cause of her queer actions. We was afraid of her. Yes, sir, afraid of her!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Manners. "The woman is a malicious gossip!"

"Malicious, my eye!" cried the cook. "You ask Margaret. She's in the hall there scared to come in. You ask Stevens, the chauffeur, though he ain't here, or any of them for that matter!"

"What reason did Mrs. Manners give you for closing up the house?" said Donovan abruptly.

"She said she was going on a trip. If you'll ask me, I think she was lying, 'cause she wasn't in no condition to travel."

"You said she is visiting a cousin," Donovan said, turning to Manners, who sat the picture of abject misery.

"Yes," he managed to say.

"Better send for her at once then," said the inspector. "I want to find out what she knows of this affair."

Tom looked quickly at the millionaire, waiting for him to speak, and when he sat motionless, the young detective said quietly:

"Mrs. Manners is in a very delicate condition, Inspector, and unless it is absolutely imperative that you question her I wish, for her husband's sake, you'd keep all knowledge of this affair from her."

Donovan grunted, while the gratitude in the husband's eyes fairly hurt the young man.

"Call in that maid," said the inspector, turning to Tom.

He found her cowering in the hall, as though divided between curiosity to hear what was taking place in the study and a fear of being asked to be a participant in it. She was rather a pretty girl, not unlike Jackson in looks, and he was not surprised when she said she was the latter's sister, and had been in Mrs. Manners's employ since her marriage to the club man.

"You were fond of your mistress?" the inspector asked her, after she had explained that at an urgent telephone message from Mr. Manners she had returned to the scene of her former employment after having been dismissed.

"Yes, sir, I loved her like a sister, and she loved me, too, sir, she did—till that actress person got to hanging around here," replied the girl, turning great yellow-brown eyes wistfully toward the officer.

"What actress person?" exclaimed Manners, leaning forward, his ashen face a mask from which dark eyes blazed uncertainly.

The girl stammered and plucked nervously at a fold of the wet coat she still wore.

"I—I wasn't to say anything about her to you, sir," she gasped. "I give her my promise I wouldn't, and though she's put me out, so to speak, I'm going to keep my promise."

"Well, suppose you speak about her to me," said Donovan grimly. "As a matter of fact, it would be a good idea if you spilled everything you know, that is, if you want to save your skin."

"I don't understand!" gasped Margaret pitifully terrified at his words, her freckles standing out incongruously on her pasty white skin.

"Well, unless I'm mistaken, there's a murder been committed!"

Tom wondered if Donovan really believed the Webb woman had been murdered, or was just trying to test the girl.

"Murder!" ejaculated Mrs. West. "Well, if there has

been, I'll bet it's that walleyed chauffeur, Stevens, done it. I never could abide him noway. Who's been killed?"

The inspector paid no heed to her remark, but continued staring at the red-haired girl. "And I've reason to believe the person murdered is the actress you speak of!"

"My Gawd, no!" gasped the girl. "Ain't that terrible! Ain't that terrible!"

"Now tell us all you know about the affair."

CHAPTER SEVEN

As Donovan asked the question Manners rose to his feet unsteadily, pointing a shaking hand toward the cook, Mrs. West, and the other detectives, while he said in a quavering, uncertain voice, which somehow seemed to have grown very old and broken:

"Need—need they hear it? Can't you send them away?"

"If you like," replied Donovan, a look of surprise in his ruddy face. "You wait outside with this lady, Larry, and look sharp for anything doing."

Mrs. West sniffed maliciously as she left the room, her little reddish eyes closed with a squint, her buxom figure bristling with indignation. She left, purposely, her umbrella behind, and returned to get it, by her manner defying them to shut her out.

"Now, my girl," said the inspector, turning to Margaret, "tell us everything you know." The girl looked embarrassed and shifted about uneasily.

"Why, I don't know so very much," she said. "Nothing for you to get all fussed up about, leastways. It's just that I promised Mrs. Manners I wouldn't tell anybody anything about Miss Webb."

"What about her?" Manners exclaimed, pausing abruptly in the center of the room, whose length he had been restlessly pacing.

"Well, sir, about six months ago, one night when you was in the city, Miss Webb drove out here, and Mrs. Manners, when she seen her, was upset something terrible, and came upstairs crying to me and got all hysterical. She said Miss Webb used to be in her company when she was an actress, before she was married to Mr. Manners, but she didn't like her at all and didn't see what she wanted to hunt her up for and try to ruin her life. Them were her very words, and I tried as hard as I could to get her quieted." She paused.

"Go on," breathed Manners.

"Then every time you went away, Mr. Manners, Miss Webb would come out here, and my poor missus was always jest a wreck. Afterward I begged her not to see the woman any more, but she said she had to. Then one night there was a man come with her——"

"Good God!" cried Manners.

"Quiet, old man," said Tom gently, laying his hand on his shoulder. The girl looked at them startled, but she repeated what she had said.

"They had an awful quarrel," she continued at a nod from Donovan. "I couldn't hear what they said, for Mrs. Manners took 'em upstairs to her boudoir, but I heard their loud voices, and I knew they were fussing. But after they was gone she said to me, 'If this thing keeps up much longer I'm goin' to kill myself,' and I said, 'What thing?' and then the poor dear threw herself in my arms and said they were blackmailing her!"

The little group gathered about stared at her in amazement. Although Tom had a number of theories at work, he had not thought of blackmail in regards to the dead woman, nor the one who had vanished, and yet with the knowledge he already possessed, it is surprising he had not done so.

"Blackmail! For what?" he said, turning to the maid.

"That's all she said. I tried to get her to talk to me, so's I could help her, not just from curiosity, you understand, but she wouldn't say anything more, only begged me to keep still about the Webb woman if I loved her and valued her happiness. I promised her and I'd a-kept my promise if you hadn't made me tell, 'cause I did love her and she was a good mistress to me until just recently, always doing things for me and giving me good advice and——"

"Never mind that," interrupted Donovan. "How long did the Webb woman continue coming here?"

"She kept it up till the night Mrs. Manners fired us, but before that—long before that—the man that had come with her that night came here as chauffeur!"

Manners smothered the exclamation on his lips, and stared at the girl as though she were opening a new world to him. Donovan leaned forward, shifting the cigar he was chewing from one side of his mouth to the other, while his great capable hands locked and unlocked, as indication of his interest.

"You say the chauffeur here was the man Miss Webb brought out to see Mrs. Manners?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think Mrs. Manners wanted to engage him?"

"Oh, no, sir, she didn't. She didn't like him at all; she just hated him, and he knew it too. I have often seen him staring at her when she got in the car with the nastiest, meanest look in his face. He always gave me the creeps with his snaky, pasty looks."

"Were you aware that your wife knew this man before she employed him, or did you hire him yourself?" Donovan inquired, turning to Manners.

"She engaged him," replied the other in a hopeless, hollow voice. "I never bothered to engage any of the servants, and I was not aware that she had ever seen him before. I usually drive my own car, and have little use for a chauffeur myself."

"You are positive that this man—what was his name?"

"Stevens."

"You are positive the chauffeur, Stevens, and the man who came with the Webb woman are the same person?" the inspector said, turning again to the maid.

"Oh, yes, sir, positive, because Miss Webb would always see him when she came, and once just as I left the room I heard him tell her 'Julia was an easy mark!'"

Manners dropped his head in his hands, and Tom turned away in pity for him. He understood the anguish the man was going through. The young detective was uncertain whether he suspected the truth regarding his wife or not, but to a person of refinement and culture, such as Andrew Manners obviously was, the washing of dirty linen in public was agonizing, aside from his distress regarding his wife's disappearance.

"Did Mrs. Manners ever see this Stevens in her private apartment?" asked Donovan, oblivious to the husband's suffering.

Margaret hesitated, as though loth to lay bare any more of her mistress's secrets. Her homely, freckled face contorted as though she were blinking back tears, but at the officer's sharp command to continue she gulped spasmodically and said:

"Yes, sir, every time Miss Webb came!"

"Where are the chauffeur's quarters?" Donovan asked Manners.

He replied that they were on the third floor of the house, in the rear, but that the man employed previous to this one had lived in the upper story of the garage.

"Hem!" said Donovan, and looked suspiciously at the clubman. "Didn't it impress you as strange that your

wife should break your precedent and install the new man in your house instead of the old quarters?"

"I hadn't thought of it," came the quavering reply.

"Where is this Stevens now?" No one replied, and Donovan turned to the girl again. "When did Mrs. Manners discharge you?"

"A week ago!"

"The chauffeur also?"

"Yes, sir."

"What reason did she give for so doing?"

"She said she was going away, but she'd been acting so queer and funny-like for a week—sort of wild—that I hated to leave her, and just begged her to let me go with her, and then she got angry and struck me——!"

"Struck you!"

"Yes, sir, but I don't think she knew she did it, so I don't hold it against her. Just the minute Mr. Manners left she sent for us, and gave us our notice. She made us all leave quick—just as though she was clean crazy to get out of the house. I think she had a regular scene with Stevens, 'cause I could hear them talkin' loud and angry way out in the hall!"

"Oh, for God's sake, stop going into the whys and wherefores of my wife's dismissing the servants!" exclaimed Manners frantically, strung to the snapping point. "Don't you realize you are wasting time—that the murderer of that woman——"

"Just a minute, Mr. Manners," replied the inspector quietly. "I'm handling this case. Please allow me to continue in my own way. Was the Webb woman with Mrs. Manners the night she discharged you?"

"No, sir."

"Have you tried to locate Stevens?" Donovan asked, turning to Tom. He replied that they had telephoned, but could not locate him. While he was speaking Manners clutched his arm frantically:

"Tell them, Steele, tell them," he whispered. "I can't stand the suspense any longer. We must find her, or I shall go mad!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

AFTER Tom had explained the situation as briefly as possible, the reason for his being at Manners Court, the disappearance of Mrs. Manners herself, and the husband's anxiety, Donovan was silent, chewing vigorously on his cigar, which he was never without.

"Puts a new complexion on the case," he said finally. "I fancied it might be suicide, but I'm not certain but that——"

"Don't say it! Don't you dare accuse my wife!" Manners exclaimed, taking the words out of his mouth. "Whether this Webb woman blackmailed her—and God knows why she should, for there was nothing in Julia's life to hide—or whether she was her friend, my wife could never have killed her! It wasn't in her make-up to do such a thing. If you accuse her I'll—I'll——" His voice rose high and shrill, and Tom, fearing for his reason, pressed a drink of brandy upon him and strove to quiet him.

"We aren't accusing your wife, Mr. Manners," Donovan replied. "But you must look at the situation in a reasonable manner. You go away on business from home. Immediately your wife, who has been surreptitiously admitting a notorious character into the privacy of her home, together with a chauffeur whom she has given new quarters inside the house, dismisses all her servants and disappears. Returning home, you find the house deserted, and, fearing for her safety, you send for a detective, who discovers the dead body of your wife's notorious visitor lying in a chamber which has obviously been used for opium smoking orgies. Now, Mr. Manners, I believe you when you say that you had no knowledge of the furnishings of the upper story of that garage; but it's an absolute certainty that Mrs. Manners was not ignorant of their existence."

Manners breathed heavily, but did not reply. It was as though the detective had opened a new vista to him, and he was seeing a phase of life entirely different from any he had ever experienced.

"There is no question," Donovan continued, "that the disappearance of your wife and the presence of the Webb woman here have a close bearing upon each other; nor is there any doubt in my mind as to the reason for Miss Webb's being able to blackmail your wife, as according to this girl's story she was trying to do."

"The dead woman was addicted to opium," said the medical examiner quietly, speaking for the first time since they had entered the house, "and this dog has died from opium poisoning."

Tom hesitated for a second, then reaching into his pocket, he drew out the bit of cardboard he had found among Mrs. Manners's lingerie and handed it to Donovan.

"Where did you get it?" the inspector asked, sniffing it, although his face did not show any surprise. Tom explained, scarcely daring to look at his host's gray face as he did so.

The girl Margaret's eyes widened when they rested upon the pungently smelling card which the inspector fingered, and she gave a gasp of dismay as she realized what it was.

"Oh, my Gawd!" she cried, suddenly clapping her freckled hand over her mouth, "that was the trouble!" Then, as though she had said too much, she became silent and looked hesitatingly toward her brother.

Andrew Manners reached toward the inspector, and, grasping his arm with a hand that shook visibly, stammered:

"Are you insinuating that my wife was addicted to opium?"

"Looks like it," snapped Donovan. "Ask the girl—she seems to know!"

"Oh, where is she? Where is she?" the stricken man suddenly wailed, but before any one could reply to his question, should they have cared to do so, the door was flung open by the young detective whom Donovan had stationed outside to keep an eye on Mrs. West. He pushed a man into the room, a wild-eyed, pallid creature, who crumpled up in the nearest chair, whimpering and shivering, and obviously in mortal terror, his clothes hanging wet and water-soaked about his gaunt, thin body.

"Stevens!" gasped the maid.

"Found him crouching on the fire escape," said the detective, "and he looked suspicious to me."

"Do you know this man?" Donovan asked, turning to Manners, who stared at the fellow as though he had never seen him before.

"Ye-es," the clubman replied. "He is my chauffeur."

"He's a hop-head," said Donovan brutally.

The cringing man started at the words, and made as though to rise, while his red-rimmed, glassy eyes glared at the persons about him, as a wild animal's would.

"He—he never looked like this before," stammered Manners. Then, flinging aside his uncertain way, he demanded, "Where is my wife?"

"I don't know," said the shivering wretch. "I wish to God I did."

"What have you done with her?" Manners cried. He caught the chauffeur by the shoulders and pulled him to

his feet, his dark eyes staring into the depths of the other's glassy ones.

"I've not done anything with her," the other replied. "I don't know where she is. I wish I'd never seen her—nor this damn place, nor——" As he saw the dead dog for the first time he gave a lurch forward, and a weird chuckle escaped him. "The stuff got him too! She did that!"

But the laugh died abruptly as Donovan jerked him about, facing him as he said in a rough, accusing voice, "Why did you kill Valerie Webb?"

"I—I—say, what are you tryin' to do, string me?" The man's pallid, unhealthy color became more sickly in tinge, and he seemed to grow smaller in size. "Kill Valerie Webb? Say, I don't know her! Who is she? What do you mean—she's dead—that I——"

"We just about know everything, my man. You were seen when you ran out of the garage, and immediately afterward we went upstairs, where we discovered the body in the room above."

The chauffeur laughed and tried to put up a bold face. He pulled his limp, bedraggled figure to its full height, and looked at the inspector defiantly, though his defiance was a pitiful thing.

"I never ran out of the garage," he said with a braggadocio air. "Why should I? It's my business to be in there, ain't it? Anyway, I don't know what you're talking about."

Donovan turned to young Jackson, who had stood silently staring at Stevens during the interview.

"Is this the man you saw when you called out?" he asked.

Jackson shook his head.

"I can't say for certain, sir. It was dark, and I didn't see only a black shadow that made me know it was a man who came down the stairs; then, when I caught at him and he broke away, I knew he was a big fellow, and skinny, like Stevens is."

"What were you doing in the house here anyway?" bellowed Donovan, dismissing Jackson's lame explanation as of no consequence.

"Great Lord, don't I live here? Can't a fellow be where he's supposed to be working?" The chauffeur's mouth worked spasmodically, and his bony frame twitched.

"That's it! Supposed to be! You were dismissed by Mrs. Manners, the same as the rest of the servants. Do you mean to say you remained here in the house after you had been discharged?"

"Yes, that's just what I mean," said the man sullenly, his gaze shifting uneasily first to one occupant of the room, then the other.

"That's a lie," said Donovan abruptly. "You took up your abode in the apartment over the garage, you and that Webb woman——"

"Oh, hell! Have it your way," muttered the chauffeur.

"What's your real name?" Donovan asked.

"Well, if you're cute enough to learn so much about me, I guess you're cute enough to learn that too. I'm a clam; I've nothing more to say." He dropped into the chair before the fireplace, and stared at it sullenly.

"No, look here, my man, you can cut out that attitude, and cut it out quick." There was a menacing ring in the inspector's voice which told Tom he meant business, and that the chauffeur had better get "down to cases." "I think we'll make you talk—you're under arrest."

"Wha—what for?"

"The murder of Valerie Webb."

"But I didn't kill her, I tell you! Can't you see I'm telling you the truth? I didn't kill her."

Donovan paid no attention to the man's protestations, but catching him by the shoulders dragged him to his feet.

"See if he has a gun, Larry, and bring him out to the garage. I want him to see the dead woman."

Stevens proved to be unarmed, but he struggled violently against being taken into the room where Valerie Webb lay, finally becoming almost hysterical as they flung aside the curtains and disclosed the stark dead figure lying among the garish oriental surroundings. In the gray, cold light of morning the weird gold and green and red embroideries, the priceless teakwood and Chinese rugs seemed more incongruous than they had the night before. Andrew Manners, who had followed the group in a dazed sort of way, clutched Tom's arm as though he felt here was a sympathetic soul.

After one hoarse cry, when he tried to break away from his captors, the chauffeur hid his face in the hollow of his arm and sobbed convulsively. There was something in his manner which bespoke of grief rather than of terror, and an impossibility to gaze upon the figure of the dead woman. Instinctively Tom felt that though the man might be a blackmailer and a drug fiend, he was not a murderer.

The little red-haired maid, Margaret, who had ventured after them, now stood clinging to her brother's hand, staring in amazement at the fairyland the place disclosed. Timidly she touched Mr. Manners's hand, and as he turned to her she said:

"I—I'd like to say something, please."

"Well, my girl?" Donovan's keen ears had heard her, but though he spoke brusquely, it was not unkindly.

"He"—pointing to Stevens—"was her husband."

"Hem! I thought so."

During the silence which followed there could be heard steps on the stairs, as though some one were slowly and laboriously climbing them. Every one turned, as though prompted by the same thought, as the door was flung open, and a figure stumbled into the room, but by the various exclamations it was evidenced no one was prepared to see the person who entered. A slim, pale, wild-eyed girl, a veritable wraith of a woman. Her dark, close-fitting gown was in disorder, and but half fastened in places, her dark, really beautiful hair was caught in a tumbled loose knot at the back of her head, and gave evidence of being wind tossed and of having been uncombed. For one brief instant, as though to steady herself, she leaned against the paneling of the door, which she had closed behind her, then she stretched out her hands and fell into Andrew Manners's arms with a sob, while he held her close to him, whispering, "Julia! Julia!"

The instant he had recognized her Tom had stepped before the couch, and by standing as he did had hidden the figure of the dead woman from her view.

After a moment Manners led the sobbing woman to the window, and drawing her beside him onto a couch similar to the one which the curtains had hidden, seated himself beside her. She shuddered convulsively, and clung to him like a terrified child.

"My dear—my dear—you have frightened me so!" murmured her husband, utterly oblivious to the others about him, as he rested his face in the masses of her hair and caressed her tenderly.

She continued to sob aloud, and for some little time did not realize that there were others in the room beside themselves, then, as though seeing it for the first time, she noticed the table with the smoking outfit exposed upon it in all its damning evidence. With a cry she sprang to her feet, pounding at it, and sending the lamp and pipes crashing to the floor. "Oh, my God! My God!" she wailed. "You know! You know everything!"

"Julia! Julia, child!" Manners cried, striving to quiet her.

Like a woman in a frenzy, she began tearing the pieces of embroidery from the walls, flinging bits of porcelain to the floor, smashing them to pieces, and grinding them under her heels, ruining priceless rugs and china. Then, for the first time, she saw Tom, the inspector and the others in the room.

"Who are these people?" she cried. "Stevens, why are you here? I discharged you—and you, Margaret, why are you here—who are you?" But, before any one could reply, she pushed Tom aside like a mad woman, and saw disclosed the cold form lying on the couch behind him. For an instant she stared at the body, silenced by the horror before her, then she gave a piercing shriek. "Valerie! She's dead!" she cried. "She said she'd do it!" With a shuddering sob she fell unconscious at Tom's feet.

CHAPTER NINE

ANDREW MANNERS brushed the others roughly aside, and lifting the senseless form of his wife in his arms, asked huskily: "Do we have to stay out here? She's ill; she needs a physician. I can't stand this!"

Tom flung open the door, allowing him to pass, and with the exception of one of Donovan's operatives, who remained behind with the body, the little procession filed back to the house.

"Take her up to her own room," said Donovan simply. "When she comes to we don't want her to have another shock."

In the library a slim, gray-bearded man was pacing restlessly back and forth as he awaited them. Evidently he had just arrived. When he saw Manners and his burden, he opened the door to admit them, exclaiming quickly, "Andrew, am I too late?"

"Dr. Graves," the clubman said by way of introduction; then as he staggered into the room the newcomer lifted Julia Manners from his arms and laid her on the long low lounge before the fireplace, feeling her pulse in a professional way.

"I didn't expect her to come to you," he said quietly. "I just notified her you were home, and for her to get into touch with you."

"You notified her——" Manners stared at him in bewilderment, as though he did not comprehend the purport of his words.

The physician bowed gravely, then looked at the others interrogatively. A spasm of pain swept over the face of Manners, but he said quietly enough:

"I'm afraid there's nothing to conceal, Graves. These gentlemen are officers of the law—Inspector Donovan, Dr. Allerton, his medical examiner, and Mr. Steele. When I discovered Mrs. Manners had disappeared I called upon Mr. Steele for assistance in tracing her—subsequent events have brought in the other officers. We fear a murder has been committed!"

"Murder! Why Julia said——" Dr. Graves hesitated. "Who has been murdered?" he said abruptly.

"Valerie Webb," Donovan replied. "You seem to be Mrs. Manners's confidante, Dr. Graves, perhaps you can throw some light on the subject."

"Poor girl, poor girl," murmured the physician, and Tom was uncertain which woman he referred to. "I was Mrs. Manners's physician," Graves continued. "We family doctors often know secrets, and under our oath are compelled to keep them; perhaps it were better if in some cases we were allowed to disclose them, as in this one, for instance. Evidently poor Julia's secret is hers no longer. Before she ever married you, Manners, she was addicted to opium, and I tried to prevail upon her to abandon the habit, but she was always opposed to the thought of a cure, saying the habit was not strong with her, and was little more than a lark. I didn't realize then why she refused. Many times have I been tempted to tell you, and have you use your influence with her, but professional ethics and my promise to her forbade. Then for months I did not see her. A week ago she came to me in a terrible frame of mind. She informed me she was going to become a mother——"

"I thought you had known it all along," interrupted Manners.

"No, she led you to believe that I was attending her, but such wasn't the case. Only when she discovered the terrible influence the drug and her mental condition would have upon her child did she consult me. After much persuasion and diplomacy did I get all the facts from her, and the state in which she was living was much worse than I have ever dreamed of. It seems, after she married you, some of the companions with whom she had occasionally associated hunted her up. They were persons whom she would naturally have avoided when in a normal condition, but the use of the drug had thrown them together. She discovered that her money and affluence were going to make her a prey for them to feed upon. Valerie Webb and her husband being the ringleaders of a dissolute set who saw opportunity unlimited in Mrs. Manners's position. Through threats of exposing her to her new friends and husband, they compelled her to pay them large sums of money, and to fit up the garage as a smoking room, the position of the building itself being such that there was easy access to it, and absolute safety assured wherein the police were concerned. Unbeknown to you, Mr. Manners, their wild smoking orgies were held, your wife at times being an unwilling party to them. The man Webb, whom you know as Stevens, installed himself here as chauffeur to always be on hand when needed, and to keep an eye on Mrs. Manners——"

"It's true!" gasped Margaret. "That's what I heard 'em talkin' about, and poor Mrs. Manners would beg Miss Webb to go away and take the hateful things with her, that they were killing her, and that she'd commit suicide if they didn't leave her alone. I didn't know what she meant then, but I do now! They were driving her insane, that's what they were doing!"

Dr. Graves nodded confirmation of the girl's statement, and again turned to Manners.

"Perhaps you had rather I'd say no more before these gentlemen?" he said.

"All privacy is gone as it is," Manners replied wearily. He seated himself beside his wife, and lifting one white, wasted hand, pressed it to his lips, as though hungry for the feel of her again. "Poor little girl—poor little girl!" he whispered. The woman moved uneasily, and opened her great, dark eyes. A shudder shook her frame, then like a sleepy child she snuggled close to her husband and closed her eyes again.

It is doubtful if she heard anything that was being said in the room, for the physician spoke softly, and the murmur of his voice was like a sedative to her jagged nerves.

"As I said," he continued, "she came to me in absolute terror about her condition. Above all else, she desired to be a mother, and the welfare of her child and your happiness, Andrew, were all that mattered. Regardless of the vice that had gripped her so resistlessly, she had never faltered in her devotion and faithfulness to you, and with prospective motherhood she was determined to rid

herself of the drug and the fiend who were making her life a hell—determined to give her child a fair chance. It was at my suggestion that she dismissed all her servants and entered an institution to be cured!"

"An institution!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yes, I pressed the realization upon her that before her child was born she must become a normal, free woman again. Time and again she had been on the verge of entering one, she admitted to me, but she had never seen a way of doing so without your knowledge, and above all else she didn't want you to know of her secret habit. However, your trip West came at an opportune time; to secure absolute secrecy, and to hide herself from her enemies, she discharged the servants, walked to the nearest car track, and entered the sanitarium under a different name, I having made the arrangements for her. We both felt that once she was freed of the use of the drug her will would be strong enough to combat with her blackmailers. Your arrival home upset our plans—for when you telephoned me, Manners, about the dog I instantly sensed the anxiety in your voice, and knew more than worry over a dog had caused you to telephone me at that hour. Early this morning I got in touch with Mrs. Manners and advised her to tell you the truth, and to let you know where she was. I didn't dream she would come out in this condition, or that they would allow it."

"I had to beg and plead," murmured the woman softly, rising to a sitting posture. "I didn't want Andy to know, but now he does, and I want to die, I want to die."

"Hush, dear," whispered her husband, "you should have told me long ago, and we would have fought this together. You shouldn't have suffered alone."

She flung her arms about him as though she were afraid he would leave her alone.

"And you still love me, Andy, you still love me?" she sobbed.

"Yes, dear! Yes."

Donovan grunted uneasily.

"Well, this mystery is solved," he said, "but that doesn't account for the dead woman out yonder."

"Valerie?" said Julia Manners softly, "you mean Valerie is dead? I thought I dreamed it."

"Yes, what do you know about it?"

"Please!" interrupted Manners.

"How long has the woman been dead?" Graves asked.

"Twelve or so hours," replied the medical examiner.

"Mrs. Manners entered the sanitarium night before last," Dr. Graves said, looking at his patient. "I met her there."

"I'm not insinuating that Mrs. Manners had anything to do with her death," said the inspector a trifle sarcastically, "but from her own expressions she knows something about it, and I want to know what that something is. What were her relations with this man here?" He turned to Julia Manners, pointing toward the chauffeur, Stevens, as he did so.

"They were man and wife," Mrs. Manners answered quickly. "She loved him, I know, and he made her the poor wretch she was. She used to be a sweet girl years ago when we were on the stage together—he—he is a scoundrel. Valerie would never have treated me as she did if it hadn't been for him."

"I didn't kill her!" the man burst forth, "and you can't hang it on me! I'll tell you the truth if you've got to know it! She killed herself, that's what she did! She did it to get even with me, and with Mrs. Manners here. God knows she threatened it often enough; and last night, when she found out Mrs. Manners had shook us, she got a spell of conscience, or something, and before I could stop her, she up and took enough dope to kill a dozen women. I didn't have an antidote handy, and I was afraid to call a doctor, her being where she was. She fed it to the dog, too, on some meat. I guess to see how much it took to knock him out. I had to see her die right before me, and not be able to do a thing, and her begging me to save her, crying that she was sorry she'd done it, and was afraid to die with all her sins. It was awful!"

Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, and his pallid skin drawn tightly over his cheek bones glistening with the moisture. There was no doubt in any one's mind but that he was speaking the truth, but confirmation of it was found in the bit of evidence Tom handed to the inspector.

"What's this?" said Donovan, taking the small white envelope on which was an address scrawled in an uncertain feminine handwriting. "It's addressed to Mrs. Manners."

"I found it on your bureau," Tom said to her, "and took the liberty of taking it in case it proved valuable evidence. I think it will explain the situation."

Julia Manners opened the envelope, and in a tense voice read aloud:

"DEAR JULIA: When you read this I'll be dead. I don't know where you've gone, but I can guess, and I know why. God knows I wish I could do the same thing. I'm sick of the whole damn life—but I can't leave him, and I can't be different. I'm sorry I made such a mess of everything for you, for you're a good sport, and I hope you cut out the dope for good. Maybe with me gone Bill will let you alone. If he doesn't, you'd better tell your husband everything, for sooner or later he'll find it out anyway, and life isn't worth the living the way we live it. I'm no good anyway, so it doesn't matter whether I go or stay, but I'm sorry for what I did to you, so try and forgive me. It's all too much for me—there's another woman anyway! Your pal, VALERIE."

"This is Valerie's handwriting," Mrs. Manners continued after a brief silence. "She often threatened suicide—she did it—I might have if——" The paper dropped from her hand to the floor, and she buried her face in her hands.

The shock on her nerves was dreadful.

She wept and sobbed, and rocked to and fro.

Tom eyed her in silence.

Her grief did not move him, however. He had other fish to fry. So he turned away and patiently waited for her storm of emotion to abate.

The chief's features hardened.

He was too much accustomed to such scenes to permit a woman's tears to move him.

A dry cough escaped his lips, and he chewed furiously at the butt of a cigar which protruded from the corner of his mouth.

Then he turned and confronted Steele with a bored expression upon his rugged features, silently shook his grizzled head, and took several steps toward the door.

"Going back to town, chief?" Tom said abruptly, anxious now to return to his own home and wife.

"Yes—but——"

"Let Stevens go," Manners said quietly. "I'd rather he weren't punished than have further scandal. He can remove his wife. I'm going to destroy the garage."

"Ain't love a wonderful thing?" Donovan said, apropos of nothing, as he was driving back to town in Tom's car after receiving a pressing invitation.

"It will forgive anything if it's the real article," the younger man replied.

THE FATAL NOTE-BOOK

By A WARD DETECTIVE

PART FIRST

A CERTAIN daring kind of robbery had become almost alarmingly frequent a few years ago.

The thief's mode of operation was to obtain access to some house where a ball or large entertainment was in progress, and to mingle with the guests as if belonging to them.

His or her stock in trade consisted of a presentable appearance and a good address, with plenty of "nerve and cheek."

On every occasion the thief had managed to get away with plunder of more or less value, and so far remained also undiscovered and unsuspected.

Among the first victims was a merchant prince, who resided in a fine old place just within the northern limits of the city.

There had been a mixed and merry social gathering at the house, and just after supper the family and guests discovered that various articles were missing—among the number a costly wrap from the dressing-room and a diamond necklace from the toilet bureau of an adjoining chamber.

"But I don't purpose anything of the kind happening a second time," said the victim, Mr. Anson Arnold.

He was about giving a birthday party for his youngest daughter. Hosts of people had been invited, and he had consulted Ben Fay, the detective, as how best to prevent a repetition of the former unpleasant occurrence.

"Why do you fear a second attempt of the same thing?" Ben asked him.

"Well, it seems to be the fashionable caper among the light-fingered just now. Almost every ball and party during the season has been followed by the discovery of a theft which could only have been committed by some one present."

"You think the thief is one of the guests?"

"Bless your soul—no! It is some person who takes the character of a guest and gets himself inside uninvited," said the aristocratic old gentleman, looking terribly shocked.

"You don't think he could make his way in through a window while the party were at supper?"

"I think not in any case which has yet come to my knowledge. In my own house it would be impossible."

"And what do you require of me to-night?"

"Simply to be present, and do what you think best."

Ben went up to the house about half-past nine o'clock that evening, and stationed himself in a shadow near the entrance, where he could take an individual view of the company as it arrived.

It was a high and spacious corner house, with narrow strips of inclosure filled with shrubbery, fronting on the two streets, and shut in by a tall fence of light iron pickets.

On one side were the entrances to the kitchen and rear grounds; on the other was a broad flight of granite steps leading from the great double front doors down to the pavement.

The stone balustrade terminated in ornamental pedestals, supporting immense iron vases filled with growing vines and plants; and it was beside one of these he had stationed himself.

Carriage after carriage rolled up and rolled away again, guests, singly and in groups, ascended the steps and entered the mansion, until the drawing-rooms were crowded.

It was getting rather late when a coupé stopped at the curb, and two richly dressed, elderly ladies alighted.

They were quite unattended. But as they passed Ben an elegantly attired young man suddenly pressed his way up the steps beside them.

Fay had not noticed him before; if he had arisen by magic out of the flagging he could not have appeared more abruptly.

"I beg pardon," he said, in a very polite salute, as he passed them, and then paused respectfully for them to precede him into the house.

Fay noticed the ladies showed surprise rather than recognition; and it struck Fay at the instant that the young man was worth watching.

Of course the ladies would naturally infer he was one of the invited guests.

And of course the footman, seeing him with the ladies, and hearing them speak without catching the words, would naturally infer the same.

If he were not an invited guest, certainly he had snatched a telling opportunity of taking the character of one.

In the light of the stained glass lamp swinging above the great double doors, the detective had obtained a distinct view of him.

He was of medium size and height, compactly and rather finely built. His features were somewhat finely cut, sallow and slightly pale. His eyes and mustache were black; his hair intensely so, and sufficiently thick and abundant to arouse a random suspicion concerning it.

Fay knew he should be able to identify him again anywhere; and so he turned his immediate investigation to something which had been occupying his attention for several minutes.

That something was a woman who for the last half hour had been loitering on the opposite side of the street.

She was short, slender, and plainly clad; she carried a large coarse shawl over one arm, and on the other an ordinary market basket.

As she loitered to and fro she seemed like the officer to be watching the arrival of the company.

But as he turned now to look after her, the woman had gone.

Fay strolled down to the angle of the inclosure and glanced toward the rear entrance.

The woman was sitting on the curbstone directly before the kitchen door.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the detective suspiciously.

She started to her feet as if he had terrified her.

"They always give me what is left after the supper," she answered at last, with a glance toward her big basket.

"Oh, all right!" said Fay, feeling that if the woman was lying—as he was morally sure she was—he had made a mistake in questioning her at all.

But to connect this frail creature, with her hollow eyes,

haggard cheeks, and poor garments, in any manner with his duties on that occasion, seemed rather absurd.

And so he made his way into the house.

After a little interval, he managed to get a moment with Mr. Arnold alone.

"Who is the young gentleman with the remarkably black and wavy hair?—the one with the red flower in his buttonhole?" asked the detective.

"I don't know him; he escorted a couple of nice old ladies—relatives. I believe he is a college chum of my son—at least, he dropped a word to that effect."

Most of the company at the moment were moving toward the supper-room.

The detective was just considering what portion of the house would be the best post of vigilance, when suddenly a piercing shriek rang from an upper floor.

"Good heavens! That's Mollie's voice," exclaimed Mr. Arnold, starting hastily toward the grand staircase.

At the instant Mollie came flying down, her lovely hair in disorder, her pretty face white with consternation.

"Why don't you stop him?" she panted, wildly, as she flew past us. "He has taken every valuable he could lay his hands on. When he saw me he made a rush for the side door."

"Stop who, Mollie—who is it?" her father gasped, as he followed her.

But she neither replied nor paused. She was down the hall, the length of a cross corridor, and out upon the pavement before the side entrance in a twinkling.

Fay was close behind her—so close that her floating hair almost brushed his face.

At the moment he thought the girl had gone mad.

At the bottom of the steps her wild race was checked by a young man, whom Fay judged had been passing at the moment.

But Mollie recognized him as a friend.

"Didn't you see the man coming out? He is a thief, and he has taken all the birthday presents of value!" she said, excitedly, as she caught the young fellow's arm and held him fast.

Before he could make any reply a taxi flashed from beneath the shadow of an opposite building and started at a furious pace down the avenue.

The officer could scarcely restrain an ejaculation of amazement.

For in the light of the side lamps he saw that one occupant of the cab was the hollow-eyed woman whom he had watched earlier in the evening.

The other was a man, and as they dashed away he was certain he had a glimpse of sallow features and intensely black hair, beneath an odd, disguising hat.

In fact, Fay believed that he was the elegant young gentleman whom he had observed entering the house with the two elderly ladies.

But subsequent events confused his views in that direction.

The taxi disappeared and Mollie still clung trembling to her companion.

"Isn't it dreadful, Johnny?" she said, crying nervously, "I don't see how one would dare come into a house full of company and do such a robbery?"

Mr. Arnold stepped past Fay, and, laying his hand on his daughter's shoulder, precipitately drew her from the young fellow's side.

"You can be of no assistance, Mr. Gaskelle," he said, sternly, to the young man, who flushed slightly, bowed in silence, and walked away.

Here was apparently another little mystery, Ben thought as he followed Mr. Arnold up the steps and into the library.

Mollie's explanation of what had occurred was simple enough.

As the party were starting for the supper-room she thought she heard stealthy sounds in the chamber where the birthday presents had been placed. One of these presents was a valuable set of rubies, which had cost Mr. Arnold several thousand dollars. Remembering how many singular robberies had been committed under similar circumstances during the previous months, Mollie instantly suspected that there was some intruder in the room overhead.

At the same time she did not wish to arouse any excitement unless there was actual cause.

She went up quietly and alone.

The door was partly open, and she went in, seeing nobody, and thinking she must be mistaken about hearing suspicious sounds. But as she crossed over to the table where the gifts had been displayed she saw the ruby set and a handsome diamond ring were missing.

She had barely made this discovery when a heavy cloak was thrown over her head and shoulders, and she was flung rudely upon a sofa behind her. Before she could disentangle herself and get upon her feet the gas was turned out, and she heard a man's footsteps hurrying down the stairs toward the side entrance. Then she screamed for help and started in pursuit. The burglar had, of course, hidden himself as she entered, and he had thrown the cloak over her head to stifle her outcries until he could get safely away.

"And he has had the taxi cab waiting in case he should be interrupted and chased," she said to the detective.

That hardly seemed likely, however.

But if Ben's suspicions were correct it might have been possible.

Anyhow, he thought it best to have the vehicle tracked without delay. And he had no doubt his investigations would lead to the arrest of the sallow-featured, black haired guest, and the speedy recovery of the stolen property.

That the elegantly attired young gentleman was at the moment driving away in the cab he did not doubt.

Fay had started to go, and was moving toward the door. At the instant he stopped with an exclamation of absolute bewilderment.

There, whirling gayly among the dancers, was the very man he could have sworn he saw in the cab. He caught Ben's eyes, and Fay was sure he smiled as he did so. The smile seemed to be full of malicious defiance.

As Ben left the house a messenger boy advanced toward him.

He appeared to have been waiting for the detective.

"Are you Mr. Fay, the detective?"

"Yes," said Ben.

He handed Fay an envelope which inclosed a scrap of paper with the single line:

"Shadow Johnny Gaskelle."

The penmanship was a wretched scrawl, as if written in desperate haste or for the purpose of disguise.

"Who gave you this?" the officer asked the boy as he noted his number.

The boy did not know.

It had been handed to him with the necessary instructions by a man at the taxicab stand a few blocks below.

Of course before Fay had left the house he had made an examination of the room from which the articles had been taken.

His search had been rewarded by finding a small notebook.

It contained nothing which Ben had as yet thought to be a clue, although he was positive it had been dropped by the thief.

By the light of the street lamp he compared the penmanship of the scrawled line with that of a few written memorandas of the book.

To his surprise the writing was identical.

"If young Gaskelle is the guilty party, then the note-book belongs to some member of the family who has taken this method of putting me on the right trail," thought Ben as he placed the scrawled line and the book in his pocket, and started for the cab-stand.

He had no difficulty in obtaining information about the vehicle which had been driven so furiously away; in fact it had already returned.

It had been hailed on its way to the stand by a gentleman accompanied by a plainly dressed woman who seemed weak and ill. The chauffeur had thought nothing strange when he was ordered to drive with all speed to the nearest physician, as the lady had fainted. He had noticed nothing unusual in the appearance of the man who accompanied her. He did not think he would be likely to know either again if he should meet them. The man said he had left them at the door of a certain physician's house, and that was all he knew.

The physician's house was only about five blocks away; and it did not take Fay long to ascertain that the couple had never gone inside.

The whole thing had been a cunning trick to throw him off the scent.

It was long past midnight when the officer finally left the vicinity of the evening's adventures, and started for home.

Between him and a certain point he wished to reach, the street crossed the tunnel of the subway.

As he gained the strip of railed sidewalk over the tunnel, he remarked that workmen had been repairing the embankment, and that there was a dangerous open space quite unguarded just beyond.

Fay had scarcely remarked this before he became aware that he was being followed.

There was a sound of footsteps, stealthy and swift, and a suppressed breathing like that of a lurking wild beast, just behind him.

Instantly he had his revolver in readiness, and whirled about on the defensive.

But he was too late.

Before he had fairly turned, a clenched fist shot out from the darkness and dealt him a thrust so unexpected and terrific that he reeled back and fell head-foremost through the unguarded opening to the track.

And as he fell he saw a flying train bearing down directly upon him.

PART SECOND

AS Fay struck the rails the first car of the train was but a few rods away.

By a miracle the terrible fall had only partially stunned the detective.

He had managed somehow to turn himself in his violent descent, and his worst injury was a dislocated shoulder.

With one mighty effort he succeeded in flinging himself clear of the track just as the train went thundering by.

The only course left now was to make his way down the tunnel to the street-crossing.

During the attack and fall he had kept a resolute grip on his automatic; but he hardly cared to risk an encounter with his assailant by clambering up the broken embankment.

With a dislocated shoulder a man is excusable in retreating. The pain was well-nigh intolerable, and a deadly giddiness succeeded his first stunned feeling. But he finally managed to make his way, creeping and scrambling, to the street.

From thence a patrolman accompanied him to the nearest police-station, where a surgeon attended to his injuries.

It was a couple of weeks before he was able to resume his duties and the investigation of the Arnold robbery.

In the meantime there had been additional thefts of the same nature at other entertainments given at other houses. In one instance a jeweled ornament of priceless value had actually been snatched from a lady's hair in a crowded ballroom.

Society was becoming indignant over the matter; and it was about this time that the now quite prevalent practice of having a detective among the company at large gatherings begun to be regarded as a protection instead of an affront to the guests, and to be considered quite the proper form by fashionable people.

While Ben had been unable to shadow certain suspected parties, he had another interview with Mr. Arnold.

He had not settled his suspicions upon any particular person, but believed the elegantly dressed young gentleman with the remarkable jet black hair was eminently respectable. He could not quite recall the name; in fact, he was not certain he had ever heard it.

But that made no difference. The elegant young gentleman was always seen at every fashionable assemblage, and was always in attendance upon the nicest ladies present.

And this was what was repeated to Fay in substance by a dozen different persons.

Nobody seemed to know exactly who the young man was; but he was treated with marked consideration because he was supposed to be the relative or close friend of some distinguished guest wherever he appeared.

"Have you connected this John Gaskelle in any way with these repeated robberies?" the officer asked Mr. Arnold.

He said he had not. Johnny Gaskelle was only an impecunious clerk whose too eager attentions to pretty Mollie he intended to nip in the bud.

"He has access to many of the best houses, though; he is quite a brilliant and popular young fellow; it's a mystery to me how he keeps up in so much amusement on so small a salary," Mr. Arnold said.

"Gambles, perhaps," said Fay, thinking that the scrawled line in his possession might contain an important hint after all.

He had thought otherwise previously. In fact, he had thought it simply a ruse of the moment perpetrated by the real offender to turn him from the trail at a crisis when detection seemed imminent.

The memorandum-book Fay had kept with the note he was satisfied belonged to the real thief.

But he did not regard it as being of much importance as a clue.

However, as he carefully inspected it a second time, he saw that the dates which had been jotted down corresponded with those of the evenings on which the thefts had been committed.

There were later dates, one underlined with a few straggling characters which he deciphered as indicating a wedding occasion.

There was another—the date of that very day—which was headed by a neatly drawn mask.

"That means the Crowcaw Club's big masquerade ball to-night," thought Fay, with a smile at his lucky guess, and a prompt resolution to be on hand for whatever discoveries he might make.

On the last page of the note-book was a diagram which puzzled the detective.

It consisted of four lines forming a square. On two

HERE'S THE SECRET!

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opposite sides were geometrical figures marked "red," on the other two were floral tracery marked "green."

From one corner of the square two straight lines ran, making an acute angle. Over one line was written "two feet," over the other "one and a half feet."

And underneath the diagram was written a number and the name of a street.

Fay decided he would take up the trail by making a call at that number, and he started forth.

He found the house to be an ordinary three-story brick building of a most orderly and respectable appearance.

A bill fastened to the balcony of the parlor windows announced that furnished rooms would be let to "gentlemen only."

The bill gave Ben a cue.

He ran up the neat steps, pulled the nicely polished bell-knob, and presented himself before a motherly-looking landlady as an applicant for a furnished room.

"I have just let my last empty room not ten minutes ago," she answered. "But I may have another—a large hall-room—by to-morrow, I think. My lodger, Mr. Gaskelle, is leaving. His week is up to-night."

As she spoke the name Fay felt like tossing up his hat and hurrahing at his streak of luck.

He was sure he had traced the owner of the note-book, and was equally sure he should master the significance of the diagram.

"Can I see the room?" asked the detective.

The honest-featured landlady thought there was no harm in showing it, as the gentleman was out.

The instant Fay had put himself inside the room the meaning of the diagram flashed through his mind.

The carpet was of a pattern alternating in squares of red geometrical figures and green floral tracery.

If Fay had jumped to the right conclusion he should find something of value secreted beneath one of those squares, at a certain distance from something—very likely from a corner of the walls.

"I should like to take the room at once," he said.

But the landlady would not listen to that. If Mr. Gaskelle wished to keep his room he was welcome; he was prompt in his pay and never any trouble.

The officer did not think he had sufficient evidence to justify searching the place, and so he allowed himself to be amiably dismissed.

And besides it was nearly dark; and if he wished to make any discoveries at the Crowcaw Club's big ball, he knew he must be on hand early. So he went there.

The detective stationed himself where he could watch the arrivals.

The hall where the masquerade was given was one of the most palatial in the city.

The detective took his post in a niche between two marble columns, within a few feet of the place where the tickets were received. Scores had passed him in dominoes and fancy dress, masked and unmasked, when his attention was attracted by a group in the broad vestibule composed of three or four ladies, and they seemed to be waiting, as if for their escort.

"He has no business to keep us waiting like this," one said, indignantly.

At the instant a black domino appeared as if he had sprung out of the floor.

"Sorry—awfully sorry," the black domino mumbled through his mask. "I was looking for my tickets. Just remembered I had left them with you."

One of the group handed him the tickets and they all passed in at once.

But the officer was convinced the black domino was not the escort they awaited.

And he was sure that he had spoken in tones he recognized—in the unctuously polite tones of the sallow-featured, black-haired young gentlemen who from the first had been the object of his suspicions.

But if he was the perpetrator of these singular thefts, how could Johnny Gaskelle be guilty?

Or were they accomplices?

Fay meant to settle the question by keeping his eye on the black domino.

And this seemed comparatively easy, he thought, as he took a mental note of the wearer—the swing of his compact shoulders, his lordly carriage and the peculiarly assured poise of the very erect head.

The officer followed closely behind the group and kept him in view for an hour or more.

Just as it had happpened in the Arnold mansion on the

occasion of the birthday party, a commotion arose just as the assemblage had started for the supper salon.

One of the maskers had been careless enough to put his wallet in a pocket of his top-coat. The coat, wallet, and a number of hundreds in bills which the wallet contained were missing. Some unknown rascal had been foraging through the room where the coat had been placed.

A lady had missed a bracelet of diamonds, any single gem of which could have purchased a principality. It had been unclasped from her wrist in a whirl of the waltz when she had been thrown to the glassily-waxed floor by a couple blindly swinging against her.

"Who has been in the room where the coats were placed?" asked the detective.

"We don't admit any one," the man said, with some embarrassment. "A black domino had lost his check, and I took him in to see which of the coats was his."

"What did the couple look like that jostled you?" Fay inquired of the lady whose bracelet was missing.

"I noticed only the gentleman. He wore a black domino," was the answer.

Ben thought that particular black domino was not far away.

He had watched it flitting toward an embrasured window of the ballroom.

The detective pushed aside the golden-tasseled red plush hangings and confronted it.

As he did so, he looked upon a tall, girlish figure, with a black domino loosened, and falling heedlessly away from her graceful shoulders, and the face turned inquiringly toward his was that of pretty Mollie Arnold.

For a second he stood speechless. He could not believe the evidence of his own senses.

"You have not worn this mask all the evening, Miss Mollie?" queried the detective.

She answered she had not. Her own domino had been gray. In a jest she had exchanged it with her partner in the last waltz. She was now waiting for Mr. Gaskelle.

Fay's chagrin can be better imagined than described.

He had fully expected to arrest a prisoner and find the stolen property upon him.

Instead he had found a young lady, whom he had badly confused.

In the conflicting and contrary evidence Fay had, he hesitated about arresting Johnny Gaskelle.

He consulted his old chief.

"The note-book is evidence enough against him. I should have arrested him at once," his superior answered.

Early the next morning Fay went up to his lodging-house. He had gone for the day. The detective asked where he was employed. The landlady did not know. That morning he had laughingly said he was off for a wedding.

Fay looked at the last date recorded in the note-book. It was the date of that day, underlined with characters which he easily deciphered.

The trail led to a suburban village.

Fay arrived just as a large wedding party was emerging from a quaint old church.

At the same moment he noticed a commotion in the church-yard.

A group of country people had gathered in awe about a woman, who the detective saw was dead, and whom kindly hands had already placed on a stretcher.

As the officer drew nearer, he recognized her as the hollow-eyed, haggard-featured creature he had watched on the evening of the Arnold party.

He made a few inquiries.

Nobody knew her; she was a perfect stranger in the village; she had been loitering in the old church-yard when she suddenly reeled and droppped like one fainting.

The kindly country people were loth to believe her dead. At a suggestion from the pitying group, they placed the stretcher on a tombstone, and bent over her to see if the heart was yet faintly beating.

As they lifted the coarse blanket which had been thrown over the motionless body, a man came striding down bare-headed from the direction of the church.

The detective started as he saw he was the elegant young gentleman with the sallow features and remarkable jet black hair whom he had been shadowing.

As he saw the woman was dead, his face whitened to the pallor of marble.

There was horror and there was a strange look of fright on his bloodless face as he flashed a curious glance at the men.

"Do not touch her! I command you on your lives not to touch her," he said, in a voice of singular terror.

His expression convinced Fay that he had leaped to the right suspicion in the very beginning.

This woman was his accomplice. After his cunning operations he would manage to turn the proceeds over to her wherever she happened to be outside, and then he would return to the party or ball, or whatever the affair was.

Fay stepped forward and placed his right hand upon his wrist.

With his left in one dexterous movement he threw the blanket from the body and seized a leather reticule which the dead woman yet held in her stiffening fingers.

One glance was sufficient. The contents of the bag were jewels which Fay knew were valuable and the proceeds of a fresh theft.

"Mr. Gaskelle—or whatever you choose to call yourself—you are my prisoner," said Ben, dropping the bag and reaching for the handcuffs.

The man uttered a smothered exclamation of alarm and recoiled a step, a look of intense horror creeping into his glaring eyes. Fay secretly felt rather sorry for the fellow, yet he knew it was against the ethics of his profession to show any such sentiment. He had a stern duty to perform and meant to carry it out to the letter.

Gaskelle stood shivering like an aspen.

He had not made the slightest attempt to escape, and Fay was totally unprepared for his next move.

With a sudden, desperate tug he wrenched his wrist from Ben's grasp, and leaped back.

The next instant there was the report of a pistol, and Ben's prisoner fell lifeless to the ground—killed by his own shot.

The man was a notorious foreign adventurer and thief. His assumed name of Gaskelle was merely a coincidence.

The scrawled line he had sent to Fay was the use of the moment, as he had supposed.

His room at the lodging-house was searched, and by the aid of the diagram was found a deftly made six inch square opening in the flooring.

Within they discovered thousands of dollars' worth of jewelry and other valuable stolen articles.

With such consummate skill and cunning had he worked that it is doubtful if he ever would have been detected except for the finding of the fatal notebook.

The woman was never identified. She was thought to be his wife.

And with their detection and death ended the singular robberies which at one time so excited and puzzled fashionable society.

Of course it was the thief who had assailed Fay at the tunnel; as was afterwards proved beyond doubt.

Handsome Johnny Gaskelle eventually married pretty Mollie Arnold.

THE LAST MAN

Or, The House at the End of the Block

A Serial Detective Story

By POLICE SERGEANT MALLORY

CHAPTER THREE

A DEEP MYSTERY.

THE boy lay upon one great flagstone, which reached from the front steps of the house to the curb, and just as the young man was about to take him in his arms, this stone began to sink slowly downward.

The body of the boy still rested on it.

Down, down it went, sinking seemingly into the bowels of the earth, while the astonished man stood gazing into the cavernous vault with intense bewilderment and surprise.

Suddenly it stopped, and the young man could see that a faint light seemed to illuminate the surface of the stone, which had sunk to a depth of perhaps twenty feet, still bearing the body of the murdered boy.

As he gazed a hand appeared, and following the hand was a long skinny arm.

It was an arm of tremendous length, and seemed to wind itself about the body of the boy.

The hand grasped the body by the waist, and suddenly drew it inward out of sight, and in one instant of time both the hand, the arm and the body of the boy had disappeared, the light was extinguished, and the great stone of the pavement flew back into its place with a bang.

The effect upon the man who witnessed these strange occurrences was most singular.

He pressed his hand to his head, and gazed at the stone with a bewildered air.

"Barney! Barney!" he exclaimed slowly. "I have wronged you, my man! For in spite of my unbelief, I now know that such an arm as you saw does exist."

He stooped, and lighting a match, hastily examined the stone.

It was to all appearances exactly like the others of the pavement.

There was about it not one trace of what had just occurred.

The young man sprang to his feet.

"Can I be dreaming?" he exclaimed. "Did I really see all this? The shot—the boy—that terrible arm! My God! What can this mean? What connection can there be between this night's bloody work and my strange adventure among the Nevada hills?"

He gazed at the house before him. All was silent and dark as a tomb. He looked up the street and down. There was not a soul anywhere to be seen. The lights in the houses were out, the dwellers within had long since sunk to repose, and upon the entire block reigned the stillness of midnight.

Now some men would have summoned the police; some would have cried murder, and alarmed the neighbors, while others would have rung the bell of the house opposite which this strange event had occurred, and tried to fathom the mystery concealed by its oaken door.

The young man did neither the one thing nor the other. He had been too long dealing with crime for any such foolish move.

He fully realized that he had been a witness to a terrible and mysterious crime, and experience had taught him the value, in such cases, of that most important virtue—caution.

He felt that the chances were all in favor of his being closely watched. Indeed, he was by no means sure that the midnight shot might not be repeated, this time taking effect on him.

He therefore coolly crossed the street, walked in the direction of his own dwelling, shut the gate behind him with a bang, and ascending the stoop, apparently entered the door.

It was only in appearance, for in reality the young man crowded in the vestibule, low down out of sight, and remained closely watching the mysterious house opposite.

An hour passed. Nothing whatever had occurred.

It is true, an occasional pedestrian hurried by, and once a band of midnight roysterers passed, making the night hideous by singing, shouting, and strumming on a banjo as they straggled past; but this was all, and the house at the end of the block was as dark and silent as ever.

Another hour sped by, and yet the man never stirred. Truly, patient watching is by him well understood. It was. It is his business. He never for an instant moved from his post. Suddenly the sound of wheels was heard approaching.

The young man, half raising himself, listened intently. The wheels evidently belonged to a heavy coach.

They drew nearer and nearer, and the coach at length came to a halt upon the same side of the street on which he was, and drew up under a gas-lamp a few doors below.

At the same instant the watcher saw the front door of the mysterious house slowly open, and the form of a man appear.

He was a man of large, heavy frame, muffled to the chin, in spite of the heat, in a heavy black cloak. He stole softly down the steps, and hurried across the street.

The young man crouched in the vestibule of Mrs. Doxey's lodging-house closely followed his every movement.

Approaching the coach, he opened the door and got in, revealing, as he did so, his features in the full glare of the gas-lamp.

The watcher saw them plainly, and sprang forward as the coach-door closed with a bang. They were the features of Christopher Lombard.

The face of this man, seen under the flickering lamp, was that of the miner, whom the watcher, Joseph Wells—for

the single young gentleman was none other than he—had held dying in his arms, in the little hut, at the head of Crooked Canyon, White Pine Region, Nevada, and whose articulated skeleton he now had in his possession, neatly packed in a box.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BAMBOO CANE.

WHEN Joseph Wells awoke next morning, he found it hard to realize that the events of the preceding night had been other than a dream.

He had made no attempt to follow the coach, as to do so would have been simply useless, there being no taxi-stand for a dozen blocks away. He had therefore done the most sensible thing possible under the circumstances—returned to his room and gone quietly to bed.

He had sought the widow Doxey's to be quiet, and have a place which he could call his own, when he wanted to drop business and have entire rest. He had missed his mark. Not yet one week in the house, and face to face with one of the deepest mysteries which he had ever tried to solve.

Joseph Wells had returned from Nevada in due time, bringing with him the body of the dead miner. Barney Nudd had accompanied him.

The loss of the tin box had been a source of great bewilderment and chagrin both to Joseph Wells and to Christopher Lombard's humble friend.

Bewilderment as to the strange manner in which it had disappeared—chagrin that through their carelessness not a single move could be made toward carrying out the miner's death-bed request. Not a single move, save one, to prepare and articulate his skeleton.

That had been done, but to deliver it at the place he had so strongly desired, to try and find his son, were things which neither the detective nor the faithful Barney could by any effort do. They did not know where to begin. Barney Nudd knew absolutely nothing at all of the past history of his dead friend.

He had met him in Nevada—being saved by him from unjust lynching—and had stayed by him from that time forth.

His effects revealed nothing, save a few thousand dollars, and a paper requesting it be given to Barney Nudd.

So as Joseph Wells was obliged to return East to his regular duties, Barney took his little legacy and accompanied him, and they brought the remains of the lonely dweller in Crooked Canyon Gulch back with him.

The skeleton articulated, it had been packed neatly in a box, and the box placed in a receiving-vault in the Marble Cemetery in Fifth street, waiting the finding of the missing papers.

To hope to ever find these again seemed wholly beyond the probable, especially to Barney Nudd, who believed they had been spirited away by no less a person than old Clootie himself, and the bones of Christopher Lombard seemed destined never to reach the resting-place he had desired.

The events of the past night put a different face on the matter entirely.

The arm!—the detective had seen it for himself—it was real. The dead man's mysterious double—here was something tangible, something to be investigated, and by investigation perhaps a clue might be found.

This strange case had excited in the mind of Joseph Wells a strong and abiding curiosity, for it was a case that called for the full exercise of his professional skill. He determined to follow it to the end. How to do it without neglecting his regular detective work—that was the question.

It was one to be speedily solved, for it was written in the book of fate that he was to be put upon that very case before the dawning of another day.

Joseph Wells hastily put on his clothes, and seizing his hat, descended to the street. Crossing to the mysterious house, which was closed as tightly as ever, he leisurely proceeded to examine the scene of the strange occurrence of the night before.

The great flagstone of the pavement showed no signs of having been moved from its place; on the contrary, the earth was apparently undisturbed between the joints of this stone and the one on either side.

To all appearance it had not been moved since the day upon which it was first laid. The detective looked narrowly about him. His eye fell upon an object lying in the gutter. He stooped and picked it up. The murder of the boy and his mysterious disappearance had, indeed, been real, for the object he now held was the bamboo cane he had last seen in the unhappy youth's right hand.

He examined it closely. It was an ordinary stick, nothing rare or costly, and around it was a silver band, bearing the letters "H. B."

"I'll keep this," thought he; "it may prove a clue not to be despised."

The office in connection with which Joseph Wells was employed was a private one, devoted to the unraveling of mysteries and the detection of crime for such as could afford to pay for the service right roundly. They dealt with the wealthy classes alone.

The business of the day was almost over, and the young detective was preparing to leave, intending to devote the evening to thought as to how best to begin the unraveling of his own perplexing case, when the bell in the private office of his superior suddenly rang sharply, summoning him to attend.

"Wells," said this gentleman, "I want to assign you to a new case."

Now, at any other time, Joseph Wells would have rejoiced at this, for the office of Manning & Brady had not been overburdened with business lately, but the fear entered his mind that it would take him away from the work he was determined to do. Still, there was no help for it, and he briefly signified that he was ready for whatever might be on hand.

"What is it, Mr. Manning?" he asked.

"To trace out a missing boy."

"A boy!"

"Yes; he disappeared mysteriously last night."

"His name?"

"It is Harry Bainbridge. He is the adopted son of the rich Mrs. Winters, No. 956 Fifth avenue."

"What are the circumstances of the case?"

"Well, there is but little clue. I must confess. The young fellow went out last evening, and has not returned—that's about all."

"A case for the police," said Joseph Wells.

"It would seem so," was the reply; "and yet I am specially charged to keep it entirely to our office, at all hazards."

"Have you nothing to begin on?"

"Nothing but this."

It was a photograph. Mr. Manning handed it to Joseph Wells. The young detective uttered a smothered exclamation. The form and features displayed were those of the boy he had seen murdered at midnight on the day before!

Joseph Wells tightened his grasp around the bamboo cane. Was fate working into his hands?

"The name you say is Bainbridge?" he said, questioningly.

"Yes, the boy's name is Bainbridge; we are employed by one Christopher Lombard."

"Christopher Lombard?"

"Yes, you seem surprised—do you know him?"

"Yes—that is, no! I did know a man of that name once, but he is dead."

"Well, this man is very much alive, or was an hour ago."

A mingled sensation of perplexity and joy filled the mind of Joseph Wells.

Mysterious as all this was, he was now in the position to devote all his time to this singular case, and this knowledge gave him unalloyed pleasure.

"Well, I suppose you will take hold of this at once, Wells?" said Mr. Manning, rising and shutting his desk, preparatory to departing for the night.

"Certainly, sir," replied Joseph Wells, "and to begin with I want you to procure for me a search warrant for a certain house at once."

"A search warrant! Have you, then, any knowledge of this case?"

"No matter. I have nothing to say. Can you get me the warrant without stating the purpose for which it is issued?"

"Certainly I can—you know that—but where is the house you wish to search?"

"The corner of Jane Street and Abingdon Square."

Mr. Manning whistled. "The mysterious haunted house in Jane Street, eh? Joe Wells, what are you up to now?"

"Get me the warrant, and you shall see."

His employer looked at him a moment in silence.

"You shall have it," he said, presently. "I know that I can trust you fully—this case is in your hands—manage it as you will."

Little did Joseph Wells dream that he would be thus aided in his plans. He had unsuccessfully turned over in his mind during the day a hundred schemes for effecting an entry into the mysterious house, and the way stood plainly open before him.

Now, Mr. Manning had not promised more than he could perform, for at a little after noon on the following day Joseph Wells and two policemen, armed with a warrant to enter and search, stood before the mysterious house at the end of the block.

The pretext was a frivolous one—inspection of sewer arrangements, or something of that sort—but so long as it accomplished his purpose, to the detective it did not matter.

Running briskly up the stoop, he rang a loud peal at the bell. It echoed through the hall within; it was loud enough to rouse the dead. There was no response whatever. Again and again the ring was repeated, but still with no success.

A small crowd had gathered at the unusual sight of any one—particularly a policeman—trying to get into the house.

"We shall have to force the door," said the detective, putting out his hand to ring once more.

"No need of that, gentlemen. Who and what did you want?"

Joseph Wells and the policemen stared before them in surprise. They had not heard the door open; there had not been a single sound. Yet open it now was before them, and blocking the passage stood the form of a strange old man.

He stood before them like a statue. His countenance was full of dignity and repose. He was short and stout, his hair and beard closely cropped and snow-white. He was evidently very old. Joseph Wells shot a quick glance at his arms—they were of the ordinary size and shape.

"Well, gentlemen, well," he said, "what means this intrusion? Whom do you seek in this house?"

The detective produced the warrant, and explained the ostensible purpose of their visit.

The man hesitated, but only for an instant. Then, throwing open the door, he said:

"Come in—inspect what you will, there are no secrets here. My name is Robert Tanningham; I am simply in charge for the owner, who is away, and I have nothing at all to conceal."

Joseph Wells and his companions obeyed. They went over the house from garret to cellar. The detective was on the alert every instant of the time, but he discovered absolutely nothing.

The house was elegantly furnished, but in the style of many years ago. Parlor, dining-room, sitting-room and chambers above, all were visited; but in neither of them was the slightest trace of the murdered boy to be seen.

There was absolutely no extraordinary thing about the premises of any shape or kind.

The old man led them through the rooms in silence, although the detective did his best to draw him out; and in less than half an hour Joseph Wells and his companions (who were profoundly ignorant of what he sought) found themselves politely bowed out, no wiser than when they had entered.

Was this all there was to the house at the end of the block, which had been a mystery to the neighbors for years.

Joseph Wells dismissed the policemen, and after making a considerable detour, at length gained his room without observation.

Turning toward the window, he gazed at the mysterious house from which he had just departed.

"Patience! patience!" he muttered. "If there is such a thing as the spirits of the departed guiding our footsteps, I feel that Christopher Lombard's spirit is guiding mine, for with this point gained I can enter yonder house when I will."

He held up his hand, disclosing a small object within. It was a complete model of a lock, with key-hole and wards molded in soft white wax.

This Joseph Wells had gained by his visit. He held the "open sesame" to the house at the end of the block.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PICNIC OF THE P. J. DOLAN ASSOCIATION.

THE P. J. Dolan Association met in McGoorigan's Hall, on Broome street, midway between Elizabeth street and the Bowery.

They formerly met in Kleinspingler's Hall, in Forsyth street, but having enacted a by-law that none but native Americans were to be patronized by their members, it was thought judicious to move over to McGoorigan's, as old Peter Kleinspingler could not be called a native American in any sense of the word.

Now Kleinspingler's Hall was in every way better adapted to the wants of the P. J. Dolan Association.

First, it was larger; second, it was cleaner, and third, it had a dumbwaiter connecting directly with the saloon below, so that members feeling in need of liquid refreshment had but to make their wants known through a speaking-tube to have them promptly and automatically supplied.

At McGoorigan's it was very different. Everything was old-fashioned, cramped, and dirty; there was no dumb-

waiter, no speaking-tube to the bar-room, and drinks had to be brought up-stairs by a boy.

Still, consistency is a jewel; McGoorigan was a native American, of course, and the Dolans patronized him, and were happy.

The P. J. Dolan Association, following the usual custom of bodies of its kind, had determined upon giving an excursion—a picnic, in fact, to be held at Excelsior Grove, on the banks of the Hudson River, a few miles above the pleasant city of Yonkers.

No expense was to be spared to make the affair one of the most enjoyable of its kind.

Flaming posters were placed everywhere announcing the excursion in glowing language, naming all the officers of the excursion, and in addition a committee of arrangements, which included every solitary member but one, who, being left out through a mistake of the printer, promptly resigned from the Dolans after avenging the insult by neatly blackening the eye of the member who had the matter of printing in charge.

Nor was this all. The seductive influence of poetry was brought into play, and the posters were headed by lines which might have fallen from the pen of a Shakespeare, a Byron, or a Poe.

Now, Mr. Barney Nudd, the returned miner from the West, had in former days been a member of the Dolans. He had been one of the five recording secretaries, and the head of the seven financial secretaries at another.

His return from the West had consequently not been unobserved. Among his old neighbors he was reputed to have made a vast sum of money, and his poor little legacy of $2,000 was speedily magnified into half a million at least.

No wonder the Dolans were glad to welcome him back, and the worthy P. J. himself, a supervisor when Barney went away, but an assemblyman now, privately informed Barney that he intended to run for Congress next year, and it was not the thing to have an association named for a congressman; he would be glad to sell out to him for a consideration, and change the name to the Barney Nudd Social Club at once.

But Barney cared but little for all these honors. He knew what he knew, and he knew that his little fortune would not stand that strain a month, still he determined to go to the picnic, and enjoy himself while he could.

The fate of the tin box bothered Barney more than any other one thing just now. He felt if he could but recover that—his dead patron's trust—he would be the happiest Irishman in the land.

Precisely at nine o'clock on the morning of the 18th of June, 19—, Mr. Barney Nudd, gorgeously arrayed, might have been seen going on board the barge "Harvest Queen," bound for the picnic at Excelsior Grove.

The barges were, as is usual upon such occasions, late in starting, kept behind in the interest of the lessee of the bar privilege on board, and the worthy Barney, meeting here his old friends by the score, partook rather freely of the cup that cheers, and likewise inebriates, and was, by the time the excursionists reached the grove, to say the least, somewhat tired.

Under such circumstances most persons would have lain down under the trees and slept it off, but Barney Nudd had no desire to make a spectacle for the benefit of the youth of the P. J. Dolan Association, and being a quiet man withal, he determined to take a stroll by himself outside the limits of the grove, back into the country-side.

His life in the West had accustomed him to long tramps; and he knew that a rapid walk of an hour or so would bring him back to the grove in good shape for the return trip.

It was considerably after midday, and the air was pleasantly cool, and the worthy ex-miner of Crooked Canyon camp, although starting off with a slight degree of unsteadiness, gained on his legs with every step he took, and it was not long before the effects of his too liberal potations began to pass off.

He was traveling along a pleasant road, through a hilly country, studded here and there with white farmhouses and gayly painted villas, the residences of men doing business in New York.

Barney Nudd paid no attention to the scenery nor to the casual passer-by; and his sole object being to sober up, it is doubtful if he would have observed to his left, standing back from the road on the brow of a little hill, a grand old mansion of gray stone, more than half hidden by surrounding trees, had it not been for a very singular sound that suddenly met his ear.

It seemed like the chattering of an ape, and yet the voice was that of a man. It seemed to come from a little stone building by the roadside; evidently the porter's or gatekeeper's lodge to the larger house beyond.

"An' what the divil kind of a baste is that now, I wonder?" muttered Barney; as he wiped the perspiration from his streaming brow.

He stepped over toward the lodge, and approached a window that looked out upon the road.

"Chatter, chatter, chatter!" went the voice within.

"Begorra, an' it's an owrang owtang I'm afther striking!" thought the exminer, as he approached.

Suddenly the chattering took the form of words. Whatever it might be that made the noise, it was clearly human.

"Go away, go away, Miss Crissy! go away and don't bother me. I don't know where he is, and if I did, I wouldn't tell you!" Then followed the peculiar chattering noise, louder than before.

Barney Nudd had now reached the window, which stood open, the space being covered by the closed blinds; and cautiously turning the slats so as not to attract the attention of those within, peered into the room.

It was a plainly furnished apartment, evidently nothing more nor less than that which it appeared to be—the gatekeeper's lodge belonging to the great house beyond.

A door leading into the private grounds stood open opposite to the window, and upon its threshold was a fair young girl of perhaps eighteen, dressed in white, with bright blue eyes, and thick braids of auburn hair hanging gracefully down her back.

Although Barney Nudd had a decided eye for the beautiful, this graceful female form did not hold his attention for a moment, for opposite her stood, or rather danced—for it did not remain still for one instant of time—a most singular figure indeed.

It bore the form of a man, but so hideously deformed was it that no one could have blamed the ex-miner if, even now that he saw it before his eyes, he had mistaken it for an orang-outang escaped from a show.

Man, however, it certainly was, and a most singular one at that, of short stumpy legs, and hunchbacked body, with a frightfully ugly head and face set deep between two misshapen shoulders; it looked anything but human, but still it was man.

The strangest part of this ill-formed creature was, however, its arms and hands.

These were as large and powerful as the remainder of its form was deformed and puny, and were likewise of a most extraordinary length.

Instinctively Barney Nudd thought of the dying miner and of the robbery of the box in the far-off Nevada hills.

(To be continued)

THE MYSTERY OF HYPNOTISM

By LEO HUGO KOCH, A.C.S.

PART I.

IN order to obtain a comprehensive article on Hypnotism the author interviewed Dr. Chas. E. Nammack, of New York, one of the best-known authorities on the subject. Dr. Nammack is Professor of Clinical Medicine, Cornell University Medical College; Attending Physician of the New York Hospital, and Visiting Physician to Bellevue Hospital. He made the following statement on the subject of Hypnotism, carefully revising the manuscript before it went into type:

THE HISTORY OF HYPNOTISM

Hypnotism, or a power corresponding to it, has been known from the earliest ages. In early times persons were hypnotized by gazing at precious stones used by soothsayers. Divination by looking into crystals and clear water was practised by the Egyptians.

Among the Persian magi long ago we know hypnotism was used, and the Indian yogis and fakirs at the present time employ it in all their performances.

Among savage nations, powers similar to hypnotism have always manifested themselves. The Laps, at the sound of a drum, and other nations, from the influence of rhythmic songs, go into stages of hypnosis. Hellwall relates that the Aissaouas, of Constantine, in Algeria, hypnotize themselves by dancing and singing. When under the influence, they plunge knives deeply into their bodies in apparently vital parts, drive sharp-pronged instruments into their skulls, cut their eyes, and do many other things which would seem sure to bring on death. None of these wounds, however, prove fatal.

The Mohammedan whirling dervishes and the Buddhists of Thibet use hypnotism, as has been shown by Dr. Spalding. For an early example of hypnotism we might even point to the habit of rocking children to sleep. This quiets the muscles, while the "hush" songs of the mother carry out the suggestion.

In modern times we find that about 1600 A. D., Van Helmont taught that man possessed powers of magnetism, and a few years later Maxwell, the Scotchmen, announced his belief in the same doctrine. Santanelli of Italy about the Eighteenth Century stated his belief in personal magnetism.

Modern hypnotism did not come into existence until about 1771, when Mesmer, a Viennese doctor, brought forward his theories of animal magnetism. Mesmer, in 1775, sent out a circular stating that animal magnetism existed and asserting his belief in a power which gave certain persons an influence over others.

Insensibility to pain under hypnosis has been proved many times. Preyer quotes an experiment made by Dr. Little, a physician who did not believe in hypnotism. He thrust a needle into the eye of a patient whom he believed to be simulating. The subject displayed no consciousness.

Great hyperathesia—a term expressing abnormal powers of feeling—has also been induced by hypnotism. Hypnotized eyes (as attested by D'Abundo)) have seen objects which ordinary vision could not perceive without microscopes; the senses of smell, taste, hearing, feeling, seeing have been intensified or deadened at the will of the hypnotist.

Hypnotism as a moral agency has been used to a marked degree. Its employment in alcoholism, tobaccoism, degeneracy and the like has proved of value. In mental disease it is a marvelous agent.

Many wonderful phases of psychic manifestation have been attributed to hypnotism. We have the remarkable fact of what is called post-hypnotic suggestion, for instance. Persons may be hypnotized and then told that at a certain time, specified days or hours afterwards, they will do certain things. When the hour arrives the subject, no matter how forgetful he may be, will exhibit great nervousness and uneasiness until the thing is done or the word spoken which he has been hypnotized to do.

During the past few years the study and practice of hypnotism has been renewed with much enthusiasm; and in America this has been especially the case, a large number of colleges and institutions having been formed for the purpose of teaching (mainly through the "mail correspondence" method) the psychological science of hypnotism, mind or thought reading, magnetic healing and kindred phenomena; while in some of the larger American, German and French hospitals hypnotic suggestion has been used extensively and with marked success, not only in lieu of chloroform and other anæsthetics during and after operations of both a minor and major character, but it has also been successfully employed by many eminent physicians in the treatment and final cure of various diseases of the nervous system, etc. Just exactly what this mysterious force in nature is composed of, no one—not even our most learned scientific men—have been able to determine; all that they can do is to offer us an hypothesis, and the various theories held by them are in themselves conflicting, but that there is a force and that it can be used for various purposes has been proved beyond a doubt. Like electricity, however, we are still unable to analyze or define it, and like electricity also it has opened up a new field of research and study for thinking men and women of scientific tastes.

Professor Quackenboss of the Columbia University predicts a great development in the application of hypnotic suggestion as a curative agent and as a means of overcoming vicious habits. He says:

"I believe that as an agent of physical cure it will shortly be universally employed by trained nurses to carry their patients through the crisis of disease. It will be used by physicians for intra-uterine inspiration, the character of the forming child will be determined by antinatal suggestion, and this method of improving, ethically and intellectually, a coming generation will be practiced on so large and broad a scale that society will feel the uplift."

HYPNOTISM HARMLESS.

Hypnotism in itself is perfectly harmless, notwithstanding all the false notions and vague superstitious talk we hear about this dreadful (?) power. It is as natural as going to your ordinary sleep at night and awakening in the morning.

Drs. Bernheim and Moll (two of the most noted hypnotic experts) and many other noted physicians and scientific men who have studied the subject and hypnotized thousands of people, say that they have hardly ever had

an instance in which it produced the slightest evil result; on the contrary, it is capable of producing many beneficial effects, not only in curing certain diseases of the nervous system, but in various other ways. It has a somewhat similar action to natural sleep upon the mind and nervous system, and will hurt no one.

After a person has once become a subject to hypnotism it is an easy matter to produce the hypnotic sleep in him, as he not only believes in it himself (having been convinced) but he has confidence in the operator, and finds that he has experienced no unpleasant or hurtful sensation during the experiment. On the other hand, most subjects seem to experience a pleasant feeling while under hypnotic influence and will frequently ask to be hypnotized.

In the deeper stages of hypnosis the subject is unconscious of his own actions or sensations. He may be made to do anything that the operator wills. He is given a suggestion and at once proceeds to act upon it.

In the lighter stages he seems to be quite conscious of all that occurs, but, as he will frequenly tell you afterward, he could not resist your suggestions or commands. You may fasten his hands together, stiffen his arm or leg, fasten his eyelids, deprive him of the power of speech, etc., without putting him into the hypnotic sleep at all, and by what is known as muscular contraction.

All sorts of illusions and hallucinations may be created. The subject may be commanded to do the most ludicrous things and will obey with the simplicity of a child. He may be made to imagine himself an orator, a prize-fighter, an actor, a chimney sweep, soldier, shoemaker, or anything that the operator wills. He may also be made to see any imaginary article, place or thing that may be suggested to him.

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE MIND.

Dr. Thomas J. Hudson tells us that the human body possesses two minds—the "objective" and the "subjective." And that in regard to this dual character of man's mental organization each is endowed with separate and distinct attributes and powers, each capable under certain conditions of independent action. Thus when a person dreams in his natural sleep his objective or ordinary waking mind is being controlled by his subjective or sleeping mind, and vice versa when in his waking or every-day state.

HYPNOTIC AND NATURAL SLEEP.

A person in their natural sleep is assumed to be in a deeper sleep than when in the hypnotic sleep; consequently we are led to believe that there are two kinds of sleep, both controlled by the subjective mind, and one waking state controlled by the objective mind.

The following is taken from an excellent article on natural sleep written by Leigh Hunt:

"Careworn people might refresh themselves oftener with day sleep than they do if their bodily state is such as to dispose them to it. It is a mistake to suppose that all care is wakeful. People sometimes sleep as well as wake by reason by their sorrow. The difference seems to depend upon the nature of their temperament; though in the most excessive cases sleep is perhaps nature's never-failing relief, as swooning is upon the rack. A person with jaundice in his blood will lie down and go to sleep at noonday, when another of different complexion will find his eyes as unclosable as a statue's, though he has had no sleep for nights together. Without meaning to lessen the dignity of suffering, which has quite enough to do with its waking hours, it is this that may often account for the profound sleep enjoyed the night before hazardous battles, executions and other demands upon an over-excited spirit.

"Sleep is most graceful in an infant, soundest in one who has been tired in the open air, completest to the seaman after a hard voyage, most welcome to the mind haunted with one idea, most touching to look upon in the parent who has wept, lightest in the playful child, proudest in the bride adored."

SOMNAMBULISM.

Many persons are known to walk and talk in their natural sleep, just the same as the hypnotist is able to make his subject walk and talk in the hypnotic sleep.

The writer knows of several instances where the somnambulist has got out of bed in his natural sleep and, having dressed himself, has performed almost a day's work before the morning arrived, in a state of somnambulism.

In one instance a woman used to get up and perform the various household duties, even to dressing her child, etc., in a state of somnambulism.

These and hundreds of other instances are of common occurrence and goes to prove the existence of the two minds.

HYPNOTISM NOT A GIFT.

I would like to thoroughly impress upon the reader of this treatise that the practice of hypnotism is not a gift to be enjoyed by a few, but that it is a power possessed by every intelligent individual, and only requires a knowledge of its principles to enable him to develop, cultivate and use it.

In this world of evolution there is no sudden change, and the hypnotist is simply a person who, taking advantage of the power that every individual possesses to control his own ordinary conduct, uses that power to also control the mind of another.

The subject simply believes what the hypnotist tells him while in the hypnotic sleep, and he proceeds to act on that belief. If you follow out the instructions that follow you will be able in a short space of time to hypnotize almost as well as any professional hypnotist, remembering always that practice makes perfect. I would also advise the reader to go in for a little scientific reading on the subject.

The following is taken from the "Hypnotic Magazine":

"What is this power to hypnotize?

"It is simply and solely the power to tranquillize the nervous system of another by forcible statements, confidentially made. Is this a gift? It is so common an endowment that fifty persons out of a hundred have it and know they have it, and the remaining fifty have it and do not know they have it."

"I may assert," says Dr. Wetterstrand, "that most people can be hypnotically influenced by a rightly adapted method. Nevertheless both patience and perseverance are sometimes required. For instance, I finally succeeded in hypnotizing a lady of about forty after having endeavored in vain seventy times to do so, and thus alleviated her severe sufferings of more than twenty years standing. Often patients believe they are going to fall asleep at once, but that is exceptional, and an effect is generally obtained only after three or four attempts, and frequently more become necessary. On the other hand, some people are so susceptible that they are put to sleep almost instantaneously."

(To be continued.)

THE SCIENCE OF FORTUNE-TELLING

PART I

PALMISTRY.

IN palmistry the left hand is always the one chosen, it being supposed that the heart and brain have more influence over it than its fellow. The art of palmistry is founded upon and determined by simple rules and long observation.

The practical part of palmistry is that which gathers probable predictions from lines, the places of the planets in the hand, and from the notes and characters everywhere pointed and marked out in the hands and fingers. Our readers will therefore be careful to let the following rules be duly observed:

In the first place each finger has its name.

(1) Forefinger—Jupiter. (2) Middle finger—Saturn. (3) Ring finger—The Sun. (4) Little finger—Mercury. (5) Thumb—Venus.

Each hand has five main lines.

(1) The life line—Vitalis. (2) The natural line—Naturalis. (3) The table line—Mensalis. (4) The liver line—Hepatica. (5) Line—Saturnalis.

To understand the principal theoretic difficulties which lie in the path of Chiromancy it will be necessary to define that science. It is, then, the science of deciphering events—past, present and to come—from the lines of the human hand.

"But," exclaims an objector, "how can these lines be the signs of fate, seeing that they are the result of the various motions of the hand itself?" Very scientific and very narrow! The logical mind sees far wider and deeper. It knows that nothing on the earth exists in and for itself; that all creation is knit together in the bonds of vital union. True, the proximate cause of these lines is the various motions of the hand; but what gave your hand these particular varieties of motion?

Is it not as easy, and much more natural, for fate to guide the motion of your hand, so that its lines shall, rightly interpreted, exactly represent your career, as it would be to stamp these lines in an arbitrary position on your chest, as men impress the image of a cow on butter?

And now a few arguments as to certain reasons for a belief in this science. And first does it not seem more natural and likely that a man should bear on himself the marks of his career than not? Does he not by common consent thus bear the marks of age and sorrow? Cannot a wise doctor predict with tolerable certainty from the appearance of a child whether he will be long or short lived? Do not men in this way bear the marks of at least a portion of their fate? And if this is so—if so much may be discovered without any special study of the subject—may we not reasonably expect that many more such indications will yield themselves to the seeker after truth?

Once more let us regard the lines themselves. As we do so does not the doctrine of final causes irresistibly suggest itself? Whereto this tangled mesh of intersecting lines? Nature, as the great Stagyrite teaches, does nothing in vain. It is idle in this connection to aver that these lines are caused by the motions of the hand. We are not asking what causes them—we are asking whereto they serve.

In the opinion of many able commentators, a reference to this science may be found in the Scriptures. At least one text in the Bible seems to refer to it—that remarkable verse in the 37th chapter of Job: "He sealeth up the hand of every man that all men may know his work."

Within the limits of a single article it is, of course, impossible to do more than give the most general outlines of the science. It is a rule in Chiromancy to choose for investigation the hand on which the lines are most clearly marked. Some author[illegible] is true, are inclined to think that all that concerns the inmost nature of the man, such as the duration of life, the state of his health and the nature of his character, may be most clearly deciphered on the right hand, while those things which are external to him, such as riches, honors, adventures, and so forth, find their clearest expression on the left. But this rule or interpretation, if it exists at all, must be taken with so many limitations that, like some rules of that more arbitrary science, grammar, it will be found in practice more convenient to ignore it altogether. On the other hand, it is an axiom of Chiromancy much must never be neglected by those who would obtain proficiency in the science that the fainter lines commemorate the past, while the clearer presage the future.

The position of the principal lines of the hand will be best understood from a study of your own palm. There are, in number, five (or, according to some authorities, who add that of the wrist, six)—namely, the Vital, the Natural, the Mensal, the Saturnian and the Hepatarian. If these are broad, well formed and clearly marked, it is a sign, according to Aristotle, of magnanimity and longevity, to which he adds that a fleshy hand is equally significant of long life but unattended with virtue and prudence. Aristotle's acquaintance with the science would seem, however, to have been too superficial to entitle his opinion to much weight.

In addition to these principal lines the hand presents an infinity of smaller ones, all of which have a specific signification. Of these smaller lines perhaps the most important is the so-called Cingulus Veneris, which when strongly marked is considered to denote an undue tendency to philandering.

Vitalis, or Line of Life, begins between the thumb and forefinger and, describing a kind of semi-circle around the base of the thumb, terminates either at the wrist or at some short distance from it. This line derives its name from the fact that the duration of an individual's life may, with probability, be calculated from it. It is divided by eight imaginary lines, equidistant from each other, into nine parts, each of which part is taken to represent ten years of life. Having thus, in imagination, divided it, it is easy for the seer to calculate the probable duration of an individual's existence. The first clearly marked solution of continuity, beginning always from the upper part of the hand, denotes the epoch of dissolution, unless this be counterbalanced by the strength and number of the little so-called "sister" lines, which are sometimes found at its side. Thus, if this line be divided within the first half of its course, it is a sign that the individual will not attain middle age; and if this division be found, for instance, in the first third, he will not reach the age of thirty, and so on. A famous doctor in former days asserted that he never failed to examine the palms of his patients after death, and always found that the division in their line of life tallied exactly with their age at their decease. It does not seem to have occurred to him that, if he had made this inspection before death, he might have saved himself the trouble of prescribing for them.

Another point to bear in mind in connection with the Line of Life is that all lines crossing it denote dangers more or less formidable, in proportion to the clearness with which the transverse lines are marked.

Wounds are indicated by lines springing from it and passing through or into the Triangle of Mars. If it ramifies to the base, this is a sign that the individual will make as many journeys as there are ramifications. A circle, cut diagonally by two curved lines, portends the loss of an eye.

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

BALANCING ROCK ON MOUNTAIN

On the western slope of Wachusett Mountain, Massachusetts, a balancing rock has been discovered. The rock, which a man found while blue-berrying, is six feet high and has three points of contact with the rock beneath. It can be rocked perceptibly in one direction without being dislodged from its position on the natural platform.

PEARLS IN OYSTERS.

Forrest Wilson of Beloit, Wis., bought a quart of oysters for 59 cents. When eating them he bit on something hard and found it to be a pearl. A few seconds later his son had a similar experience. The stones had not been cooked enough to harm them. The largest one is worth $50 and the smaller one $10, making $60 in two bites.

WOMAN FINDS NEW STAR.

Another star has been discovered by the Harvard College Observatory. It was announced to-night that Miss Joanna C. S. Mackie of the observatory staff in the course of her examination of photographs of the Milky Way taken recently at Cambridge had detected the newcomer. It is far too faint to be seen with the naked eye.

The discovery just made is the thirty-fifth of its kind in the history of astronomy and the nineteenth to the credit of the Harvard College Observatory.

STRANGE SUPERSTITION.

It was formerly believed that epilepsy could be cured by wearing a silver ring made from a coffin nail. Seven drops of blood from the tail of a cat and blood from a recently executed criminal were said to be valuable remedies for epilepsy. To cure a felon or run-around hold the finger in a cat's ear for half an hour. For toothache trim your nails on Friday or eat bread that a mouse has nibbled or carry in your pocket a tooth from a soldier killed in battle. For ranula of the tongue spit on a frog. For alcoholism drown an eel in brandy and make the drunkard drink the brandy. To cure warts rub the wart with a potato and feed the potato to a pig.

RISES FROM THE DEAD.

Jenns Jonssen, a farmer, residing at Famen, Sweden, died there after a week's illness.

The corpse having been placed in a coffin was kept for three days to pay their last respects and to partake of the usual refreshments served on those occasions. The company was greatly alarmed when on the evening of the fourth day the "dead man" arose in his coffin to an upright position and addressed the following words to his family and friends:

"You thought me dead. I may have been, but the sounds of your revelry awoke me. Shame on you all for spending my money in feasting! I have done with you, and prefer the next world to your society."

The man thereupon sank back in his coffin and died in reality this time. He was buried the following day, the whole village turning out to attend the funeral.

The Svenska Dagblad, which prints this story, appends the signatures of twenty witnesses, who testify to its truth.

ANIMAL ELECTROCUTION.

Recently at a Los Angeles motion picture colony there took place an interesting electrocution, the victim in this case being a big leopard which had been employed filming so-called "animal stuff." Because of the treacherous attitude of this leopard, it was decided to execute him before injury befell any of the players. At first shooting was decided upon, but in view of the extreme beauty of the animal's pelt electrocution was finally adopted. A large steel plate was placed on the floor of the cage, and a wire fastened to the animal's leg. When the leopard was finally coaxed over to the steel plate the 6,000-volt current was switched on for an instant, resulting in the immediate death of the erstwhile motion picture performer.

TAKING AWAY ALL HOPE.

Scientists have found a way of taking the "alcohol kick" out of lemon, orange and other flavoring extracts without causing deterioration to the fluids which are now so eagerly sought after by the thirsty ones.

This announcement was made in Pittsburg by the Mellon Institute, which houses scientists of all classes, creeds and convictions. It was also announced that there was no specific intent on the part of the scientists to deprive mere man of his "drink" in making the well known brands of flavoring extracts impotent, but to find a use for glycerin, which at the present time is a drug on the market.

So it came to pass that glycerin was found to fill the place now occupied by alcohol in flavoring extracts. Glycerine is a by-product of soap making. It is mostly obtained from the "spent lye" of the soap maker. One Pittsburgh manufacturer is already utilizing the discovery and turning out flavoring extracts with a base of glycerin.

STEEL BLOCKHOUSES FOR THE ROBBER-PROOF BANK.

The robbery of suburban banks around Chicago has been so frequent and so successful of late that bankers have had to give no little attention to this unusual phase of banking. How to protect the moneys and securities placed in their care has been a grave problem, but one thinking banker has solved it by installing a steel blockhouse in his establishment.

The steel blockhouse is built into the wall of the building, and can be entered through a narrow door on either side. A number of loop-holes permit guns and machine guns to be used to cover every part of the banking rooms. The steel plate used is of sufficient thickness to resist small-arms fire. The guns of the blockhouse also command the exterior of the building. Night and day a guard is posted in this fortress, ready at an instant's notice to man the guns and machine guns.

So no highwayman can hope to hold up this bank by covering the teller with a gun; he will still have the blockhouse to reckon with.

ANTS RAISE GRASS.

A species of ants living on the semi-arid plains of Texas cultivate areas of grass about their dwellings. On the cultivated space, which may have an area of ten to fifteen feet, only one kind of grass is allowed to grow, and it is said that the seeds of this grass are planted by the ants. Roads are laid out regularly, radiating from the hill across the plain, and the shoots of undesirable plants are promptly nibbled off as fast as they appear among the crops. When the harvest of the protected grass is ripe the ants may, when the colonies are large and numerous enough, collect the seeds and convey them along a radiating highway to the little rooms in their hills. Interesting and wonderful is the economy of these tiny insects. They do considerable damage to grain in fields where their mounds are reared and the clearings made.

DEER SLAUGHTERED TO FURNISH PERFUME.

Musk, the basis of most strong perfumes, comes from the interior of China and Thibet, whence about 30,000 ounces are exported every year. It is the secretion of a gland of the male musk deer, a small, sturdy, hornless animal that is hunted in the mountains at altitudes of more than 8,000 feet.

From Tachienlu, the principal port of export, about 2,000 catties of musk are exported annually, averaging twenty-two pods to the catty. As each pod represents one deer, at least 44,000 male deer must have been killed to furnish this amount. But, as the deer are caught in traps, many does and fawns, which contain no musk, are killed uselessly. A writer in the North China Daily News, quoted by the Scientific American, estimates that the annual slaughter is really about 100,000 head.

Each pod contains a piece of musk about the size of a walnut. It is worth ten times its weight in silver, so buyers have to be on their guard against the slightest adulteration.

SAW HIS DEAD WIFE AND BABE ON CEILING.

That a "miracle picture" of a dead woman and her child appeared on the ceiling of her home, remained ninety hours and was seen and recognized by former friends and neighbors, is the story told by dozens of the latter in Princeton, Mo. J. Donelson, the woman's husband, said:

"Between 9 and 10 o'clock on the night of Dec. 19 I was reading the Bible. It seemed as though a voice said: 'Morg, look up,' and in gazing up I saw on the ceiling the picture of my wife, with our little infant in her arms, just as they were when they were buried Oct. 8 last.

"My father noticed my gaze and asked me what I saw. I asked him and my mother if they saw the picture, and my mother said 'yes.' I asked her what it was. She said: 'What do you think it is?' and I said, 'It is the picture of Anna and the little one.' She said, 'It sure is.'

"We then asked God to leave the picture on the ceiling. It stayed there until about 2 or 3 o'clock the afternoon of the 23d, when it disappeared."

GREATEST UNDER-WATER TUNNELS.

The first subaqueous tunnel ever constructed was that under the Thames between Rotherhithe and Wapping, London, which was carried to completion under the direction of I. K. Brunel, a celebrated English engineer, who died 69 years ago. The tunnel was commenced in 1825 and was opened in 1843. It was driven at places through liquid mud, at a cost of about $6,500 per lineal yard. Six workmen lost their lives as the result of an irruption.

The tunnel has a length of 1,300 feet. It is now owned by the East London Railway. Several other tunnels have since been constructed under the Thames, and improved engineering methods have greatly reduced the cost. The first tunnel under the Hudson River at New York was started in 1874, but was long abandoned, and only completed in 1908, through the efforts of William G. McAdoo, who recently resigned as Secretary of the Treasury and Director General of Railroads. In 1872 Chesborough commenced a tunnel under the Detroit River, connecting Canada with Michigan, but continued irruptions of water led to the abandonment of the scheme, which was brought to completion only a few years ago. The first important subaqueous tunnel in America was that under the St. Clair River, connecting Sarnia, Ont., and Port Huron, Mich., completed in 1891.

CHANGE OF ZERO THERMOMETERS.

In consequence of a "change of zero" with age, the readings of mercurial thermometers frequently become too high and those of spirit thermometers too low. The former effect, says Mr. F. J. W. Whipple, a well-known English authority, is due to a gradual shrinkage of the bulb, which forces the mercury up the stem. Various reasons have been suggested for the opposite effect in spirit thermometers; it has been thought that the thin film of liquid "wetting" the interior of the bore was sufficient to account for the errors found in tests, and that standing the thermometers with the bulb downward for a long time would always get rid of the discrepancies (as it certainly does in some cases). The vapor of the spirit has been supposed to enter into chemical combination with the glass or to make its way through it by way of invisible cracks. Mr. Whipple believes there is a simpler explanation. Mercury thermometers are sealed up when almost filled, so that they contain practically no air, and as the pressure inside the bulb is less than that outside the strain tends to make it shrink. Spirit thermometers, on the other hand, are sealed with the bulbs in a freezing mixture, so that they may contain as much air as possible, a condition which is said to reduce the trouble due to evaporation. Consequently such thermometers have high pressure inside the bulbs as compared with the pressure outside, and hence there must be a tendency of the bulbs to expand, so that the readings become too low and positive corrections are required.

CHARACTER IN HANDWRITING.

A man who has made chirography a study says that heavy down strokes are the signs of strong passions. Letters that increase in size toward the end of a sentence bespeak sincerity. Those that diminish in like ratio signify insincerity. A slanting hand shows an emotional nature inclined to be sentimental. A few words in a line denote extravagance but not generosity, the latter quality being shown by a long final stroke to each word. A short abrupt stop to each word indicates selfishness. Flourishes show affection and self-esteem. Down strokes to y's betray opinionism. Large capitals and small letters mean pride. A tendency to leave a hook on a dash line ending a word shows a love of power. High writing shows nobility; thin high writing a religious mind. Going below a line with the curves of the letters betoken a vivid imagination. Lines that have a tendency to slope up show courage, those that slope down betoken despondency. Letters that are sharp and pointed at their base mean a severe temperament. Closed letters "a's" and "o's" if left open at the top show a frank disposition, combined with a sense of honor. Naturally vertical handwriting indicates reserve and independence. Words written as if in a chain show a studious disposition. A dash under the name is a sign of self-consciousness and also of a wish to be popular. If words are widely separated the writer has a quick intuition. Very round tails to "g's" and "y's" betoken a lack of self-control, and short dashes show suspicion. Of course, different characteristics taken together sometimes alter results, and it is only by long practice, according to our expert, that a correct deduction can be drawn from an ordinary letter.

WHY THERE IS A LIMIT TO FORESTS.

That all lands in the United States better suited for growing trees than for growing anything else should be used for growing trees has been a doctrine long preached and generally accepted without question. But Dr. Wilson Compton, secretary-manager of the National Lumber Manufacturers' Association, says this is not only not necessarily but it is not even probably true.

To explain his assertion he gives the extreme illustration that if 95 per cent of the land of this country were better suited for pasture than for any other purpose, would we use 95 per cent for this purpose and become a pastoral people? Or, if 60 per cent of the area of the country were better suited for growing trees than for agricultural crops or grazing, would this country use the 60 per cent for tree growing and "thus have lumber enough to house five times the number of people it could feed?" In the state of Maine, Dr. Compton points out, much of the land is best adapted for forest growing, but to feed its people is quite as important as to house them, and it is wiser economy to devote part of the land to raising mediocre agricultural crops than to devote all of it to raising splendid forests.

Dr. Compton looks at the question in a big way and from the viewpoint of the Nation's needs, and he concludes that the "clearing of the land has frequently paved the way for industrial and agricultural expansion which has produced greater wealth than did the forest industries in their prime."

ABOUT THE LOVING CUP.

A correspondent recently wrote the editor, asking how it happened that loving cups mostly have three handles. It may be interesting reading to see how this is explained.

It seems that there is some doubt both as to the origin of the cup and the raison d'etre of the three handles. One surmise is that the loving cup originated in Italy, where it happened not infrequently that hosts stabbed their guests or poisoned them at friendly banquets. From this is evolved a reason for the three handles. The host drank from the cup first, this act showing that the liquor in the cup was not poisoned; then, holding it by two of the handles, he passed it to his friend on the left. His two hands being occupied, he could not stab his friend, and as his friend took one handle in his right hand he would have been put to inconvenience to stab his host with his left hand.

The late Lord Lyons, British Ambassador at Paris, used to relate the following history of "The Three-Handled Loving Cup:" King Henry of Navarre (Henry IV. of France) while hunting became separated from his companions, and, feeling thirsty, called at a wayside inn for a cup of wine. The serving maid, on handing it to him as he sat on horseback, neglected to present the handle. Some wine was spilled over, and His Majesty's white gauntlets were soiled. While riding home he bethought him that a two-handled cup would prevent a recurrence of this. So His Majesty had a two-handled cup made at the royal potteries and sent it to the inn. On his next visit he called again for wine, when, to his astonishment, the maid (having received instructions from her mistress to be very careful of the "King's cup) presented it to him, holding it herself by each of its handles. At once the happy idea struck the King of a cup with three handles, which was acted upon. As His Majesty quaintly remarked: "Surely out of three handles I shall be able to get one."

A twentieth century reason for the third handle was given recently by a son of toil in this city. Two Irishmen, while at work in the subway, unearthed an old loving cup and it was scrubbed out to serve as a beer receptacle, known in the proletariat vernacular as a "growler." One day at lunch time Mike had an elaborate thirst, and, putting the beer-laden loving cup to his mouth, proceeded to swallow the contents. Pat, who was entitled to his share, watched Mike's feat in open-mouthed astonishment, and as the last drop disappeared down Mike's capacious oesophagus he said: "Oi know now why that cup has that third handle." "Why?" said Mike, catching his breath after the final gulp. "To keep the growler from goin' down that tunnel wid the beer," said Pat in disgust. There may have been big thirsts and big mouths in ancient times.

THE SPEED OF FLIGHT.

Doubtless the swiftest passage over a long distance ever made by man was that of the daring aviators who flew from Newfoundland to Ireland. They traversed a space of 1,932 miles in 972 minutes. That was at the rate of nearly two miles a minute. To be precise, it was a mile in 30.18 seconds, or a fraction less than 175 feet a second. For a much less distance a slightly higher speed was made by an army airplane between Boston and New York. The distance of 175 miles was made in 83 minutes. That was a mile in 28.45 seconds, or more than 185 feet a second.

That is rapid traveling. It is not, however, the swiftest aerial flight known. A swallow could literally fly around and around one of those airplanes when the latter was at top speed. Carefully conducted tests by a French scientist have demonstrated that the speed of a swallow in full flight sometimes goes as high as 290 feet a second, or at the rate of a mile in eighteen seconds, while the ordinary flight of a swallow is 210 feet a second, or considerably faster than the airplane.

The eagle is a comparately slow bird on the wing, making no more than 75 feet a second, or much less than half the speed of the airplane. Surprising as it may be to many readers, the great, heavy wild goose, which "honks high" when "everything is lovely," is a far swifter bird than the eagle, in fact, fully twice as swift, rushing through the air at the astonishing speed of 175 feet a second. The homing pigeon is also far swifter than the eagle, having been known to maintain an average speed of 132 feet a second for a distance of a hundred miles. Perhaps the swiftest bird of prey is a species of falcon, which has been known to fly about a thousand miles in eleven hours, or at the rate of 133 feet a second.

These speeds vastly exceed, of course, that of the fleetest land animals. The race horse running a mile in two minutes covers only 44 feet a second. English fox-hounds make 60 feet a second, and some dogs are said to have run 90 feet a second. The hare is said to make as much as 60 feet a second for a short distance. The fastest deer ever accurately timed was a roebuck which made 74 feet in a second. Some smaller antelopes are said to be much more speedy than the larger deer. The huge giraffe, despite its long legs, is believed not to go more than 50 feet a second. One of the fleetest of all large land creatures is the ostrich, which can run at the rate of 80 feet a second.

Men can run about 32 feet a second, that being the world's best record for a hundred-yard sprint. Contrary to common supposition, skaters are no swifter than runners, the world's records for both being precisely the same —9 2-5 seconds for a hundred yards. Runners on skis have, however, made as much as 72 feet a second, and in leaping on skis more than 100 feet a second is attained.

Leaping on skis is therefore doubtless the swiftest method of locomotion yet practised by man. But even that is slow when compared with the speed of some other creatures. It surpasses, as we have seen, the hare and the deer, and far outdistances the comparatively slow kangaroo. But there is a jumping mouse in the African deserts which is credibly said to make 80 leaps a second of 10 feet each. That means 800 feet a second, which is more than four times the speed of the airplane and three times that of a swallow. Nor is even this amazing creature the swiftest known, for the common flea has in his leaping a velocity of 850 feet a second, which approximates ten miles a minute.

WONDERFUL MACHINES.

A mechanical grain drill is provided for such grains as need to be planted systematically in rows or hills. It is infallible in its operation, and would plant corn, for example, in the middle of a macadam road if this was required of it. Among other attachments it has a land measurer, resembling a cyclometer, which records the acreage planted. To cover the seed it has planted it has a system of hose which is adjusted to work straight or zigzag.

A variant of this apparatus is used for weeding. Still another is the bean planter, which is quite remarkable in its "intelligence," so to speak. It drills the hole in the ground, plants the beans, covers them and marks the position of the next row at one operation. It will even alternate corn with beans, turn and turn about, or plant corn or beans, distribute fertilizer and cover everything impartially. In fact, it will do anything for which the farmer has intelligence to adjust it.

The potato planter would make a farmer of a generation ago sit up and rub his eyes. It requires that the potatoes be supplied, but will do all the rest of its own initiative. It picks the potato up and looks it over—or seems to—cuts it in halves, quarters or any desired number of parts, separates the eyes and removes the seed ends. It plants whole potatoes or parts thereof as desired, as near together or as far apart as the judgment of the farmer on the driving seat suggests. Having dropped the seed it covers it, fertilizes it, tucks it in like a child put to bed and paces off the next row with mathematical accuracy.

Certain vegetables, notably tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflower, celery, lettuce and some others, need to be started in cold frames and transplanted for the practical business of growing. For this purpose there is a plant setting machine, which will handle a sprout as if it loved it, establish it in its new environment, gather the earth tenderly about its roots, give it a copious drink of water from a tank it carries and cover from four to six acres in a day.

The various operations generally known as "cultivating" were once the bane of the farmer's existence. Now he has a machine for each and every operation of crop tending, with a driver's seat as comfortable as can be. These machines seem to know a weed from a crop plant intuitively, and while they will snatch the former out by the roots without compunction, they pass the plant unharmed, provided, of course, it is growing in its proper place. These machines have been highly specialized, and for every operation connected with the tending of every kind of crop there is some one machine which performs it a little better than any other.

When the crop is ready for gathering mechanism is seen at its best. The perfection of the modern reaper and binder is illustrated by an incident which is reported to have occurred in Illinois. A farmer had driven his reaper into the edge of a field ready for cutting, and dismounted from his seat to get a drink of cider. While he was thus occupied the horses took fright and ran away. They tore around and around the field, cutting a full swath with every jump, gathering up the grain, binding it with twine and tossing the bundles to one side. Before the team was caught it had covered six and a half acres, leaving only patches here and there to be gone over.

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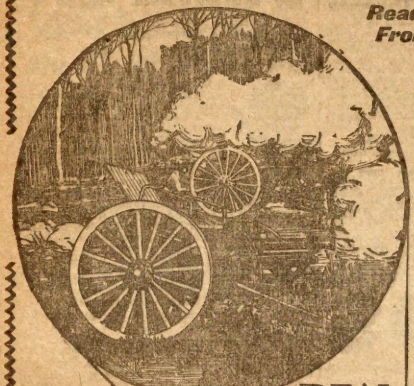

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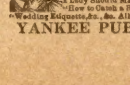

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